SPECIAL TIME EDITION

World's Greatest Places

Beautiful Destinations

Amazing Architecture

Unforgettable Experiences

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TIME

World's Greatest Places

HOW WE CHOSE THE 2026 WORLD'S GREATEST PLACES

AROUND THE WORLD, MORE PEOPLE ARE VENTURING FAR FROM HOME. IN 2025, SOME 1.5 billion tourists traveled abroad—about 4% more than in 2024. Among the destinations seeing especially strong momentum were Egypt, Brazil, and Bhutan, each of which recorded tourism growth of 20% or more last year.

Travel trends can shift quickly, of course, and global events can reshape itineraries. Yet the impulse to explore endures. At its best, travel is a bridge—an opportunity to encounter new cultures, welcome visitors, and discover how much the unfamiliar can feel surprisingly familiar.

Each year, TIME solicits nominations of places—including hotels, cruises, restaurants, attractions, museums, parks, and more—from its international network of correspondents and contributors, as well as through an application process, with an eye toward those offering new, exciting, and relevant experiences. The result: 100 extraordinary destinations to stay and to visit this year.

Among this year's World's Greatest Places: Cizhong, China's Songtsam Lodge, a boutique hotel network that seeks to tempt tourists out of China's bustling cities and into the lush countryside; Philadelphia's Netflix House, the ultimate destination for fans of original shows from *Stranger Thing*s to *Is It Cake?* to *Squid Game*; the United Arab Emirates' Surf Abu Dhabi, which made waves as the first artificial surf park to join the pro surf championship circuit, and is open to visitors of all abilities; and London's new V&A Storehouse East, which is making art more accessible by allowing visitors to check out priceless pieces and spend intimate time examining them up close.

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Asia / PLACES TO STAY

SONGTSAM LODGE CIZHONG

Yunnan, China

OPENING DOORS TO THE HINTERLANDS In 1978, China's leader Deng Xiaoping introduced a sweeping set of measures aimed at globalizing the isolationist country, still reeling from the aftermath of the Cultural Revolution. The "Reform and Opening Up" program not only transformed the country's economy but kickstarted tourism, earning Deng the nickname, "the Architect of Modern China." In the decades that followed, China's rapid urbanization drew people and investment toward megacities like Shanghai and Shenzhen, leaving much of rural China—with its vast wilderness and deep-rooted traditions—less accessible to visitors.

Now travelers are venturing further out to the country's remote regions. Rural areas across the nation have experienced a surge of visitors in the post-COVID years due to increased government infrastructure and a growing desire from Chinese urbanites to escape the cities, according to China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism. For tourists, the country's recent easing of visa rules, with an expanded 10-day (240-hour) visa-free transit policy that allows travel across multiple regions for visitors from over 50 countries, also contributed.

China's Songtsam Lodges are leading the push. The upmarket, independent brand has cultivated a network of inns throughout rural China, and now counts 18 properties across Yunnan, Tibet, and Sichuan among its collection.

Following a meticulous two-year renovation, Songtsam Lodge Cizhong is one of its newest entrants. It reopened last August in the southwestern province of Yunnan, set at 7,218 ft. elevation in the eastern Himalayas, just 25

miles from the Myanmar border. The contemporary stone and wood resort sits amid walnut trees and prayer flags on the steep banks of the Lancang River (Upper Mekong). As the brand's first wine resort, it pays homage to French missionaries who brought winemaking to the region in 1867, yet today it remains a vibrant mix of Tibetan, Han, Bai, and Naxi traditions, where visitors can experience excursions to the nine alpine lakes at Nanjilou, private vineyard tastings, and local meals with lashings of butter tea, smoked and preserved pipa meat, and rice and vegetable dishes cooked in walnut oil. The expansion took the property from 10 to 26 rooms, each with carved wooden window frames, locally woven rugs, and private balconies overlooking the river and vineyards, where Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Meiguimi—a native tannic red—are grown.

Songtsam Resorts was founded by Yunnan native Baima Duoji, a former CCTV documentary filmmaker. "My father is passionate about Tibetan culture, nature, and storytelling," says his daughter Florence Li, Songtsam Resorts' Vice President. "In 2000, he turned our ancestral home into Songtsam Lodge Shangri-La. By creating this brand and expanding it throughout the Himalayas, we are able to continue his mission of championing Tibetan and local cultures while giving travelers access to remote, pristine landscapes."

The brand's pipeline of developments furthers its reputation for revitalizing rural Chinese culture in places that rarely see thoughtful, high-end development. A new Yading Route, launched in 2024, lets visitors experience previously inaccessible Himalayan trekking paths, home to Tibetan monasteries and rare flora and fauna like golden snub-nosed monkeys, snow leopards, red pandas, and blue poppies. And the Songtsam Linka Retreat, which opened this spring in Kunming, the capital of Yunnan, was designed by 2012 Pritzker laureate Wang Shu and appeals to the wellness set with a spa and Tibetan-inspired treatments.
—Adam H. Graham

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

MHARO KHET

Jodhpur, India

AGRITOURISM TAKES ROOT IN RAJASTHAN In a state brimming with history and opulence, Mharo Khet is an intimate, contemporary retreat that is quietly carving out a niche as an agritourism destination blossoming in the midst of the austere Thar Desert. Husband-and-wife duo Rajnush Agarwal and Vedika Prasad added 10 standalone suites to their family farm—*mharo khet* means "my farm" in Marwari—on the outskirts of Jodhpur. The design draws from craft traditions across India but reinterprets them with a modern hand: Channapatna lacquer toys, Rajasthani block prints, and Gujarati textiles appear throughout the interiors in fresh, unexpected ways. Set on a lush 40-acre regenerative farm, stays revolve around food. Guests can take cooking lessons, forage on guided farm walks past strawberry patches and pomegranate trees, and dine at three plant-forward restaurants, including the alfresco Paeru, nestled in a guava orchard. —Sarah Khan

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

OBEROI RAJGARH PALACE RESORT

Rajgarh, India

BASECAMP FOR TIGER SAFARIS AND TEMPLE HOPPING Set above a rain-fed lake in central India's Maniyagarh Hills, The Oberoi Rajgarh Palace occupies a meticulously restored 350-year-old residence of the Bundela dynasty. Opened in November 2025, the 65-room resort features frescoed interiors alongside private pools, gardens, and terraces. But what truly sets the resort apart is its proximity to singular experiences: Across the lake lies Panna National Park, a 200-sq.-mi. reserve known for its successful Bengal tiger repopulation program, as well as Indian leopards and sloth bears. Oberoi naturalists lead excursions through nearby Raneh Gorge, where the Ken Sanctuary's spectacular pink granite canyon ends in a waterfall and protected gharial habitat. And the palace historian escorts guests to the intricately carved, millenia-old Hindu and Jainist temples of the Khajuraho Group of Monuments, a protected UNESCO World Heritage site. —Brett Berk

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

RISONARE SHIMONOSEKI

Shimonoseki, Japan

RETHINKING THE FAMILY RESORT Hoshino Resorts' family-forward properties often land in places you'd least expect to travel with children, from the Imperial Family's summer residence in Nasu to the wine country of Yatsugatake. Its newest opening, the 187-room Risonare Shimonoseki, debuted in December on the busy harborfront of Shimonoseki, a food lovers' destination an hour from Fukuoka and famous for fugu, the notoriously poisonous puffer fish. A kid-centric hotel in Japan's fugu capital may sound counterintuitive—but here, it works. The split-level property leans fully into playful design: sand-filled rooms with hammocks; a natural-lawn terrace where toddlers run free; and another terrace that recreates a beach with sunken sofas set directly into sand. A two-sided pool anchors the property—one half a brightly colored zone with blowfish murals and a 30-meter waterslide, the other a serene infinity pool overlooking the Kanmon Strait. Programming ranges from harbor cruises to craft workshops, with nightly talks about the 160 blowfish species found at the aquarium next door. Complimentary babysitting lets parents slip off to the spa or the hotel's Italian-Japanese fugu restaurant—proof that this is a family hotel that treats adults too. —Adam H. Graham

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

HOME TALE LAYA

Laya, Bhutan

A FOOTHOLD FOR THE FUTURE It took 4,000 horse trips to build Home Tale. That alone hints at the remoteness of Laya, a semi-nomadic settlement in Bhutan's Gasa district, reachable only by foot, hoof, or helicopter. Until now, visitors—mostly hikers tackling the punishing Snowman Trek or guests attending the annual Royal Highland Festival—camped or stayed in homestays with outdoor bathrooms and heat limited to a bukhari stove. Home Tale started with a simple wish: Bhutanese trekkers wanting a warm shower. The idea took on fresh urgency when the six cofounders learned that their horseman's wife had suffered life-threatening altitude sickness while harvesting cordyceps—despite living above 12,500 feet her entire life. The group pooled its savings to build a four-room lodge she could manage safely, without risking her health. Each sunlit room has a window nook overlooking the village and snow-dusted peaks, an ensuite bathroom with impressive water pressure, soy-pigmented blue beams inspired by dzongs, and bamboo Layap hats hung on stone walls. Profit isn't the point. The founders hope Home Tale can raise living standards in the region while modeling thoughtful hospitality. Change is already underway. Zhiwaling Heritage, in partnership with Yangphel Adventure, will debut 16 geodesic tents for the next Royal Highland Festival, with plans for a permanent 16-room hotel by 2027—developed alongside De suung, the country's Royal volunteer corps. —Erin Levi

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

HOUSE OF TUGU OLD TOWN JAKARTA

Jakarta, Indonesia

A HOTEL AS CULTURAL ARCHIVE When House of Tugu finally opened in Jakarta's Old Town (Kota Tua) in January 2025 after two decades of development, it offered something rare in Indonesia: a public home for Peranakan heritage. One-of-a-kind antiques painstakingly collected over nearly 60 years by Anhar Setjadibrata, who co-owns the Tugu Hotels & Restaurants group with his wife, Wedya Julianti, and daughter Lucienne Anhar, fill the 26 guest rooms and corridors of the historic eight-building complex. That visibility matters. For generations—from 1967 until nearly 2000—assimilationist policies restricted public expressions of Chinese-Indonesian identity, leaving many Peranakan Indonesians disconnected from their heritage. Today, House of Tugu displays more than 1,000 privately preserved pieces, including an 87-ft. gold- and red-hued Chinese New Year dragon from the 1960s and a tiger-headed ceremonial boat built in 1648. The next stage arrives in June with the opening of the on-site Huang Museum, which will bring several thousand more artifacts out of warehouses and into public view. "We don't want to be a typical museum," Lucienne says. "We want to tell the stories of each of these items—and the people behind them." —Joni Sweet

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

FUFU TOKYO GINZA

Tokyo, Japan

AN URBAN SANCTUARY WITH PRIVACY TOP OF MIND Tokyo's bustling Ginza district is synonymous with luxury shopping, making it an unexpected setting for the latest Fufu, the upscale Japanese resort brand typically found in more scenic destinations like Hakone and Nara. Yet the Fufu Tokyo Ginza, which opened in November 2025, feels quietly revolutionary. In a city of 14 million, it has mastered the art of privacy. Every room features a private balcony and an en-suite onsen bath filled with volcanic water trucked in from Fufu's property in Atami, about 90 minutes away. A rooftop footbath pairs high-backed cabanas with complimentary wine and sparkling yuzu soda, while reception—bathed in mind-calming neutrals—is a herringbone configuration of individual check-in alcoves separated by washi paper screens. Dining follows suit: Sushi Ginga seats just eight, with wooden dividers that fold out to create intimate booths, while Ginza Gayu is a warren of private rooms painted with seasonal flora and Japanese wildlife. The effect is transportive—a private cocoon floating above the city's frenetic streets. —Adam H. Graham

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

MANDARIN ORIENTAL BANGKOK

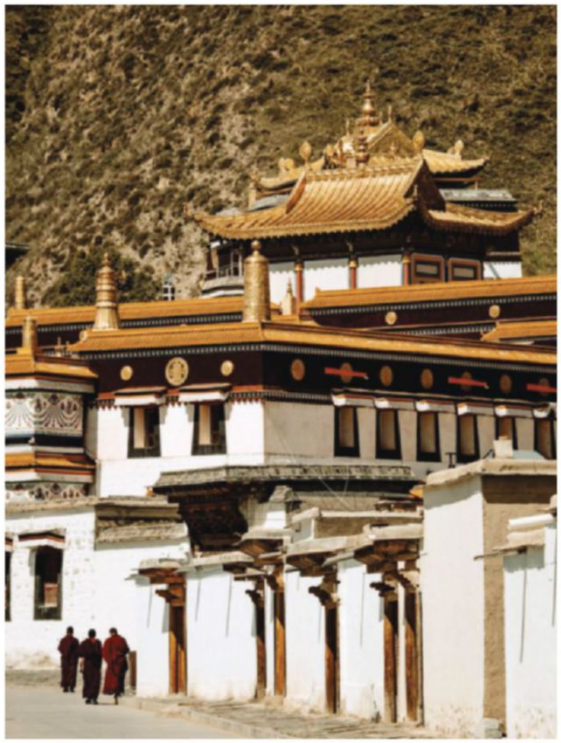
Bangkok, Thailand

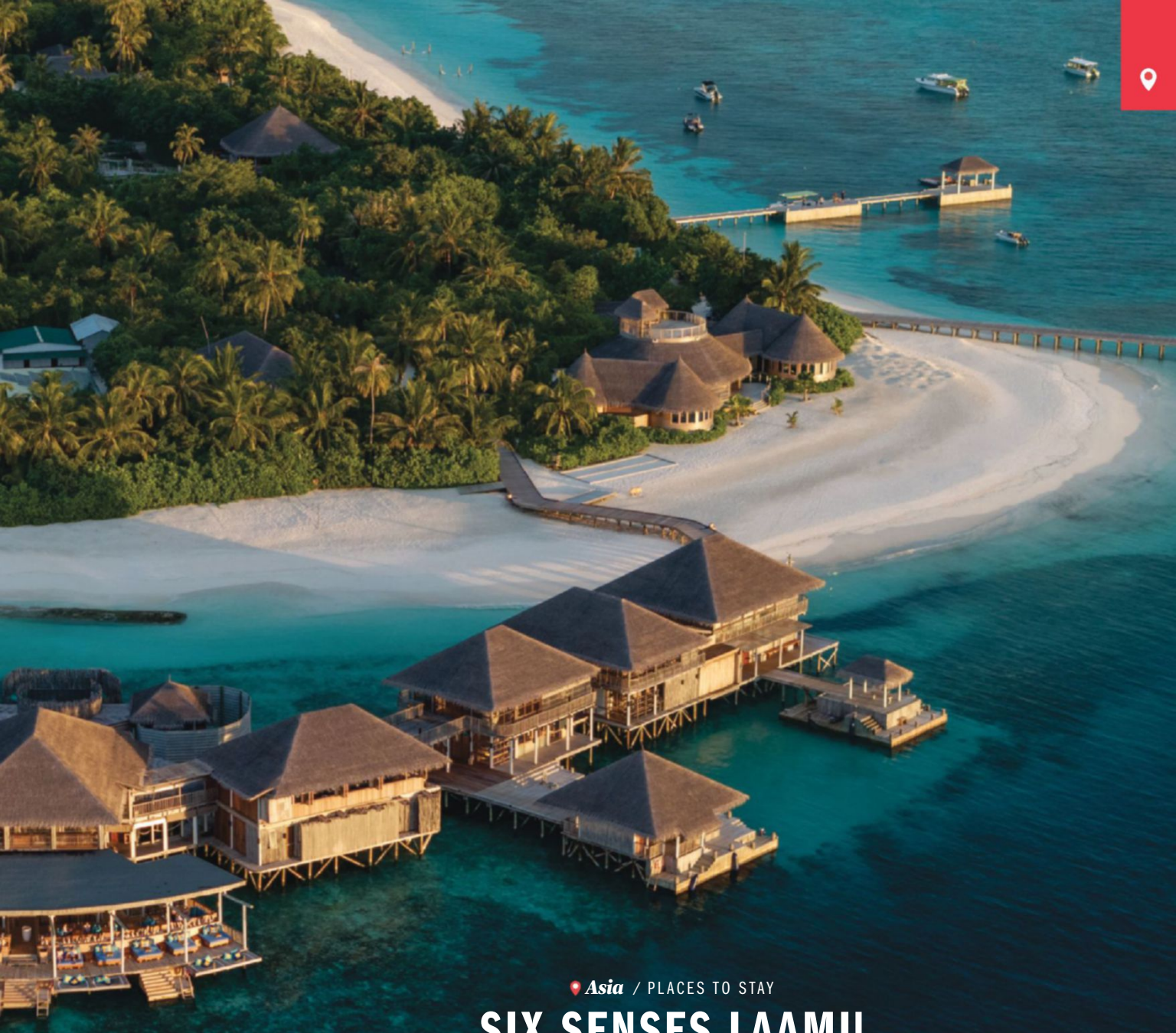
A LEGEND ALONG THE CHAO PHRAYA RIVER There's no shortage of choice when it comes to luxury hotels in the Thai capital. From Andaz to Aman, almost every global group has planted its flag here, and those still missing, such as The Langham and Six Senses, have properties on the way. But even amid increasingly stiff competition, Bangkok's oldest hotel, the Mandarin Oriental, gives many a newcomer a run for its money. This neoclassical beauty on the edge of the Chao Phraya River might celebrate its 150th anniversary this year, but it's far from outdated: Frequent renovations have kept the rooms—such as the split-level Chao Phraya suites, which received a floor-to-ceiling, floral-heavy makeover last year—looking current, and amenities have changed with the times. Aside from textbook Thai massages, the teakwood-clad Oriental Spa now has CBD-oil therapy on the menu, while a slew of new and refreshed restaurants, such as royal Thai fine diner Baan Phraya and the chi chi Le Normandie (recently taken over by French haute cuisine doyenne Anne-Sophie Pic) prove just why this grand dame is still on top of her game. —Chris Schalkx

NORDEN CAMP

Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, China

PRESERVING LIFE ON THE PLATEAU Founded in 2013 by nomad-turned-entrepreneur Yidam Kyap, Norden Camp began as a seasonal base for urban travelers to experience rural life in China's remote Gansu Province. The original camp sat on a riverine oxbow outside Labrang, near one of Tibetan Buddhism's most important monasteries and close to Kyap's maternal roots on the Sangke grasslands. As the camp's success inspired imitators, Kyap began rethinking how best to protect both his culture and community. Norden closed in late 2023 for a complete rebuild, reopening in May 2025 with a more considered approach. Drawing inspiration from herders' winter resting spots, American architect Blake Civiello worked with local carpenters and stonemasons, sourcing regional materials for the new glass-and-timber structures. The nine cabins now feature integrated heating, and visitors gather in the communal spaces in handwoven yak-hair tents on the buttercup-dotted grounds. Days are spent chanting with monks, learning to milk yaks, attending horse festivals, or hiking to nomad family picnics with homemade momo dumplings and tsampa cookies. Evenings wind down at the riverside bathhouse, where six private saunas and indoor-outdoor showers offer a sleek counterpoint to life on the plateau. —Cynthia Rosenfeld





Asia / PLACES TO STAY

SIX SENSES LAAMU

Laamu Atoll, Maldives

MALDIVES WITH A MISSION At Six Senses Laamu, marine biologists are as integral to the barefoot luxury experience as the sommeliers and chefs. Just beyond the overwater villas sits the Sea Hub for Environmental Learning in Laamu (SHELL), a purpose-built research center hosting resident NGOs and one of the most ambitious resort-based conservation programs in the world. In the wake of the 2024 global bleaching event that devastated reefs across the world, the Maldives Underwater Initiative released 3 million coral larvae—reared in onsite laboratory tanks calibrated to the lunar cycle—onto damaged reefs, while also cloning vulnerable species. Its sister organization, Maldives Resilient Reefs, developed the country's first resort-based sustainable fishing program. Long-term seagrass research has since identified two previously undocumented species in the Maldives and confirmed that these meadows function as vital fish nurseries. The resident Manta Trust team has catalogued 150 individual rays and uses the world's first underwater contactless ultrasound scanner to check on pregnant mantas, while the Olive Ridley Project leads turtle research across Laamu Atoll. What makes Laamu singular is not just the scale of the science happening on site, but the access to it. Guests can explore SHELL's labs, galleries, and amphitheater; dive alongside working biologists; earn PADI's Manta Ray Dive Specialty certification; and help identify and monitor threatened species. —Jonny Bierman

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

SOORI PENANG

George Town, Malaysia

HERITAGE, DISTILLED In George Town, Penang's historic core, heritage hotels often lean heavily on ornate Peranakan antiques. Soori Penang charts a more considered, contemporary path. Designed and owned by SCDA Architects founding principal Soo K. Chan, the 15-suite hotel mines his early years living in a historical shophouse within the storied Khoo Kongsi compound, reinterpreting those memories for modern travelers. Outside, it blends into its traditionally styled surroundings. Inside, custom onyx lamps cast a soft glow through once-shadowy interiors, while restored glazed light wells illuminate serene water features—a reference to monsoon rains Chan recalls filling interior courtyards below. The restrained color palette lets form and texture lead, with subtle references to Penang's multicultural history, like *shishi* lion statues and stone-look circular windows modeled after those in the ornamented clan house temple. Weekly performances spotlight *wayang Cina* (Hokkien Chinese opera), *bian lian* face-changing art, or *wayang kulit* shadow puppetry. Guests can explore temples by chrome trishaw, fortune-telling included, before returning for Penang-inflected Mediterranean dishes alongside elegantly re-plated Nyonya classics sourced from the city's best stalls. —Kathryn Romeyn

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

THE SILK LAKEHOUSE

Hangzhou, China

FINDING HERITAGE IN A HIGH-TECH CITY One of the Middle Kingdom's seven ancient capitals and an erstwhile Silk Road hub, Hangzhou now seems intent on hurtling toward the future. Home to Alibaba and AI juggernaut DeepSeek, the city has earned a reputation as China's Silicon Valley. The Silk Lakehouse, however, embraces the past. The lakeside retreat is the first property in Shangri-La Signatures, a new collection from the luxury hotel chain focused on residence-style stays shaped by local culture and heritage. Set along the shore of West Lake, the hotel draws inspiration from the refined elegance of a Jiangnan silk merchant's home. Programming skews traditional too: tai chi sessions, Song Dynasty-style tea rituals, and meals by Michelin-starred chef Alan Yu. In a largely touchless city, hands-on workshops—cloisonné enameling, silk-fan making—bring Hangzhou's history into focus. Sipping grassy Longjing tea within these serene walls, it's easy to forget about algorithms and automation. In preserving the artisanal soul of the city Marco Polo once dubbed "greater than any in the world," The Silk Lakehouse reassures us that there's still plenty of silk among the silicon.
—Ross Kenneth Urken

THE BLUE JASMINE TRAIN

Thailand

A TRAIN BUILT FOR IMMERSION When the Eastern & Oriental Express, A Belmond Train suspended its Singapore-to-Bangkok route in 2020, it left a gap in Thailand's heritage rail offerings—and room for something new. Launched in November 2025, The Blue Jasmine journeys between Bangkok's Hua Lamphong Station and Chiang Mai on nine-day round trips with limited departures, threading through rice paddies and mountain landscapes. The itinerary is padded with hotel stays in Bangkok, Uthai Thani, Chiang Mai, and Sukhothai, with just two nights spent onboard the train. Passengers enjoy butler service and immersive experiences along the way, including lunch aboard a traditional rice barge on the Sakae Krang River, a market visit in Uthai Thani to sample grilled street foods and offer alms to passing monks, and a tuk tuk tour of Ayutthaya's ancient temples. The train itself has a history, too; its cars are renovated 1960s Japanese sleeper carriages originally gifted to the Thai people by Japan, outfitted with wood paneling and batik fabrics. With room for just 37 passengers across 10 air-conditioned wagons, the train offers three accommodation categories, from two-bunk cabins with shared corridor bathrooms to upgraded suites with private facilities. Most meals are included onboard or at stops along the route. This may not be Belmond, but what The Blue Jasmine lacks in over-the-top luxury it more than makes up for in cultural cachet. —Terry Ward

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

SHAKTI HIMALAYA PRANA LODGE

Kumaon, India

BACKPACKING GOES LUXE There are only two ways into Shakti Prana—and both are on foot. Guests choose between a 30-minute steep climb or a gentler 50-minute walk through this lesser-known corner of the Indian Himalayas, an arrival that sets the tone for the stay. Opened in October 2025, the seven-suite retreat is the crown jewel of Shakti Himalaya, a luxury trekking company that operates a network of restored village houses and lodges across Kumaon, Sikkim, and Ladakh. Founder Jamshyd Sethna, a lifelong hiker, launched the company two decades ago to support local communities while adding the comforts he missed on his own treks: proper beds, five-star service, and world-class cooking. Perched roughly 7,000 ft., Prana's remote location meant every element was built by hand. The solar-powered suites have wood-burning fireplaces and sitting rooms, and floor-to-ceiling windows open to spectacular views of Nanda Devi, one of India's highest peaks, and the Panchachuli Range of the Himalayas. An all-inclusive stay covers transportation, a custom chef's menu, and privately guided hikes each day. Together with the newly opened Shakti Panchachuli, Shakti Prana reflects how walking travel—once resolutely low-budget—has found a more luxurious footing. —Hillary Richard

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

AARUNYA NATURE RESORT

Kandy, Sri Lanka

A HIGHLAND RETREAT WITH PURPOSE Aarunya Nature Resort takes its name from a Sanskrit phrase meaning "first rays of the sun," and it truly is as much nature as it is resort. The property, built by skilled village carpenters, sits on 10 mountaintop acres of ancestral land owned by architect and founder Nath Rankothge. At a new bamboo-clad Nature Research Pavilion, visitors can work alongside naturalists and Ph.D. students on habitat mapping, reforestation, and biodiversity research, and can contribute to studies focused on protecting species such as the endangered Moorer's Shrub Frog. But it's not all work. Rankothge drew inspiration from traditional *ambalama* resthouses for the minimalist design of the original nine villas, each carefully positioned to frame views of the Knuckles Mountain Range. From outdoor bathtubs and plunge pools, guests can spot hanging parrots and scarlet minivets moving through the canopy. Last year, Rankothge added the Sol Sanctuary villa, designed around the Hindu Sri Yantra—a sacred geometric grid symbolizing the cosmos and the divine union of masculine and feminine energies. Strategically placed ceiling apertures transform the space into an observatory, morphing it with shifting light throughout the day. In 2026, Aarunya will also expand its wellness offerings with natural therapies that incorporate estate-grown spices like cinnamon, cardamom, and nutmeg.
—Cynthia Rosenfeld

Asia / PLACES TO STAY

MANANG LODGE

Manang, Nepal

A PLUSH NEW BASE IN THE ANNAPURNAS Manang isn't just for hardcore hikers anymore. Along Nepal's storied Annapurna Circuit—where landscapes shift from evergreen alpine forests to an otherworldly high-altitude desert shaped by ancient oceans—a new lodge signals a change. Perched above the yak-dotted Marsyangdi River valley, Mountain Lodges of Nepal's 14-room, stone-built Manang Lodge is the first upscale accommodation in the region. Floor-to-ceiling windows frame views of the sacred Annapurna range, while modern comforts—including heated beds—soften the altitude (a dizzying 11,312 ft.). Once trekking's crown jewel, the Annapurna Circuit has been reshaped by road construction, compressing what was once a month-long, 150-mile journey into as little as eight days. That same infrastructure has also made Manang more accessible, now reachable via a roughly 10-hour drive from Kathmandu—or quick heli from Pokhara. From the lodge, guests can explore Manang village, the 600-year-old Braga Monastery, glacial lakes, sacred meditation caves, and quieter routes like Annapurna IV's lower base camp, where Manang Lodge hosts a stellar picnic lunch. There's even an off-season draw: In winter, Manang is considered one of the best places in Nepal to spot the elusive snow leopard. —Erin Levi

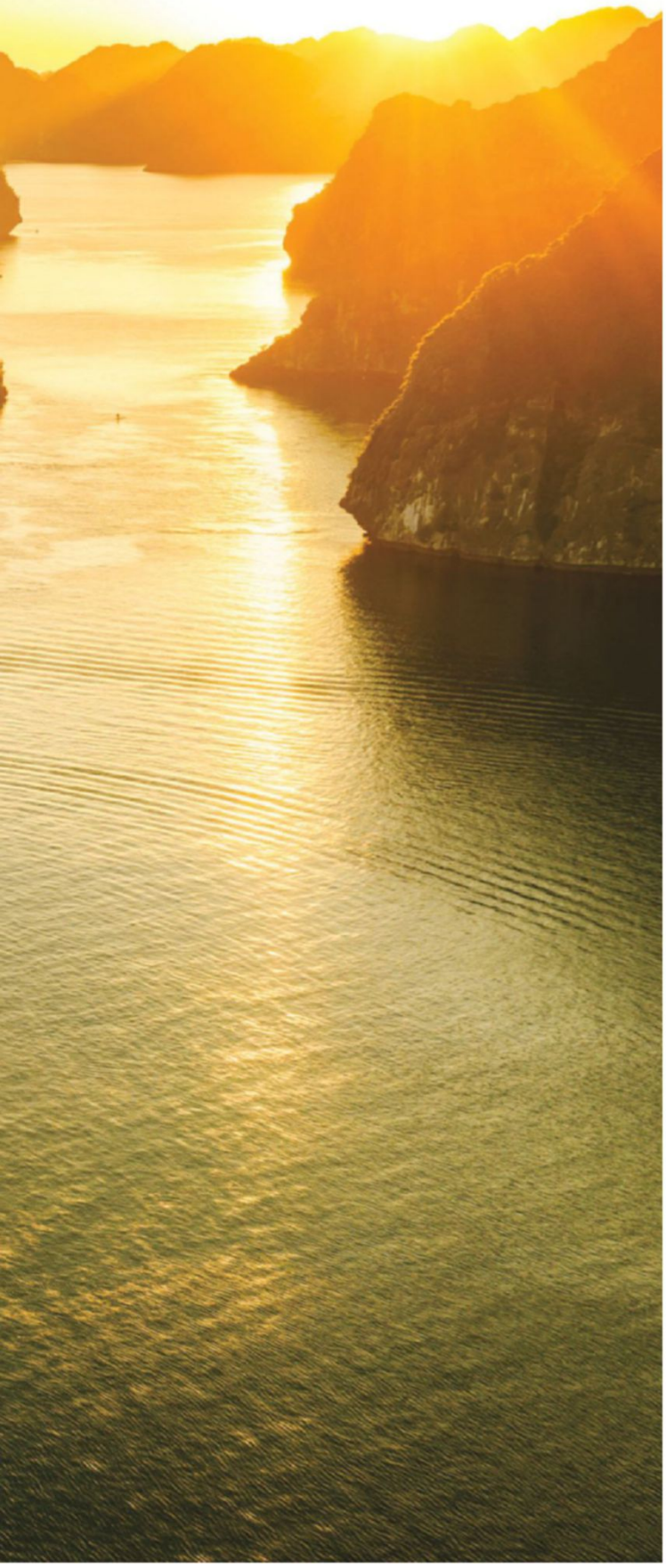
Asia / PLACES TO STAY

BHAYA SOUL

Hạ Long Bay, Vietnam

A FLOATING WELLNESS RETREAT

Traveling through Hạ Long Bay, Vietnam's natural wonder with its foliage-topped limestone karsts and throngs of junk boats, just got more restorative. The reason is *Bhaya Soul*, a 20-cabin vessel with a swimming pool deck that launched last July. Positioning itself as the bay's first wellness-focused overnight cruise, each cabin is outfitted like a boutique hotel room with a bay-view soaking tub and private terrace. The one- or two-night all-inclusive experience emphasizes mindfulness and local food, from multi-course meals featuring herbs and lotus stems from the Bhaya Community Village's organic farm to octopus and grouper caught in the bay. Mornings begin with singing bowl meditation inside the Tien Ong Cave, where archaeological evidence suggests human presence dating back 10,000 years. Guests also cycle through the Việt Hải fishing village, receive a 40-minute foot massage that begins with a Vietnamese herbal ritual, and end their evenings with a guided sound meditation under the stars. Select 2026 sailings expand the concept further with Soul Sanctuary retreats incorporating yoga, ocean breathwork, and sound healing sessions led by internationally trained practitioners.
—Kathryn Romeyn



Asia / PLACES TO STAY

HUNZA SERENA HOTEL

Hunza Valley, Pakistan

A LUXURIOUS GATEWAY TO THE KARAKORAM Home to five of the world's 14 peaks above 8,000 meters (26,247 ft.), Gilgit-Baltistan has long kept a low profile despite its towering geography. That's changing fast. This mountainous corner of northern Pakistan has emerged as one of Asia's most exciting new adventure frontiers, with international visits surging 121% in 2024. That year, the Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development opened the Hunza Serena Hotel, an 82-room property designed to welcome a new type of tourist. Balconies open onto the wide-shouldered Rakaposhi Mountain, whose glaciers glimmer white above the jade-green Hunza Valley. Below sit the mud-brick forts of Altit and Baltit and terraced orchards of apple and apricot trees. Hunza Serena is drawing a new wave of discerning travelers to northern Pakistan—many journeying with upscale operators like Wilderness Travel. They spend their days trekking the Karakoram Mountains before returning to rooms finished with inlaid woodwork, kilim carpets, and Gabbeh wall art that nods to Hunza's heyday as a Silk Route trading hub. —Mark Johanson

MAANA LIVING

Kyoto, Japan

SPREADING THE JAPANESE CRAFT GOSPEL Opened in September 2025 in Kyoto's quiet Higashiyama Ward, Maana Living is a design-forward boutique that introduces visitors to the world of Maana, a hospitality brand shaped by Japanese craft and tradition. Wooden shelves and a low central table display delicate ceramic teacups, bamboo vessels, *warosoku* candles, and incense sourced from Japan's oldest incense maker. Traditional *tsuchikabe* walls showcase hand-twisted *warazaiku* (straw crafts), while pendant lights from Kyoto-based sculptor Ren Nakane lend the space a soft warmth. Founded by childhood friends Hana Tsukamoto and Irene Chang, Maana Living functions as both shop and entry point. Many of the objects for sale also appear inside Maana Homes, the brand's collection of renovated *machiya* townhouses across the city. Maana Atelier hosts hands-on workshops in the historic Nishijin district, while immersive multi-day retreats—focused on food, home design, or pottery—let visitors learn techniques from the artisans behind the work. Later this year, Maana will open another modern *machiya* built with materials salvaged from the Atelier's renovation, extending the brand's circular, craft-first approach to hospitality. —Rebekah Peppler

KAI TAK SPORTS PARK

Hong Kong

BUILT FOR THE WORLD STAGE

Hong Kong has officially joined the big leagues with the debut of Kai Tak Sports Park, a sprawling new district that has transformed the Kowloon Bay waterfront. The $3.9 billion development, unveiled last March, occupies the former northern tarmac of Kai Tak Airport, breathing life back into a shoreline left quiet since the airport closed in 1998. At its heart is the 50,000-seat Kai Tak Stadium, a shimmering orb wrapped in nearly 27,000 iridescent aluminum panels that shift from metallic blues to sunset pinks as the light changes. The venue has already hosted landmark events: a record-setting Hong Kong Sevens rugby tournament, which drew more than 110,000 spectators over three days in April 2025; a four-night Coldplay run that attracted more than 200,000 fans; and July's Hong Kong Football Festival, when the stadium welcomed its 1 millionth visitor. With a fully soundproof and retractable roof, adaptable pitch, in-seat cooling, and sweeping harbor views from the lively South Terrace, the stadium is a technological standout. Beyond that, the 69-acre park features a 10,000-seat arena, youth sports ground, tennis and beach volleyball courts, a track, a playground, an outdoor theater, large-scale public art displays, and pop-up food markets. A packed events calendar and 700,000 sq. ft. of retail space—adding cafés, a 40-lane bowling alley, and a climbing wall—round out the district. The momentum continues with GO PARK Sai Sha, a 1.3 million-sq.-ft. mixed-use community hub near Sai Kung designed by Zaha Hadid Architects. With golf, tennis, roller skating, pickleball, and concerts, it further cements Hong Kong's rise as a sports and entertainment powerhouse. —Kate Springer

DIB BANKGOK

Bangkok, Thailand

LOCAL ROOTS, GLOBAL REACH For his first major public commission in his native Thailand, Los Angeles-based architect Kulapat Yantrasat served two masters: the client and the equatorial sun. The result is Dib Bangkok, a contemporary art museum that opened in December 2025. Commissioned by businessman Purat "Chang" Osathanugrah, the project fulfills his late father's vision of giving Thais local access to international art, while also platforming Thai artists within a global context. Bangkok's climate and the Buddhist concept of enlightenment shaped Yantrasat's redesign of an existing 1980s concrete warehouse. The museum guides visitors upward through 75,000 square feet of galleries, toward the top floor's sawtooth skylights that filter daylight into the space while shielding artworks from the harsh sun. Dib's collection of more than 1,000 works includes *Breast Stupa Topiary* (2013), a stainless-steel meditation on femininity by Bangkok-born artist Pinaree Sanpitak, alongside works by international artists like Alex Katz, James Turrell, and Lee Bul. Kanachai Bencharongkul, managing director of Bangkok's Museum of Contemporary Art, applauds the new museum's unique curatorial vision. "Together, we offer two complementary lenses into Bangkok's evolving art scene—ours deeply connected to cultural heritage and visual storytelling, Dib's rooted in contemporary innovation and spatial experimentation." —Cynthia Rosenfeld

Asia / PLACES TO VISIT

AABBCC

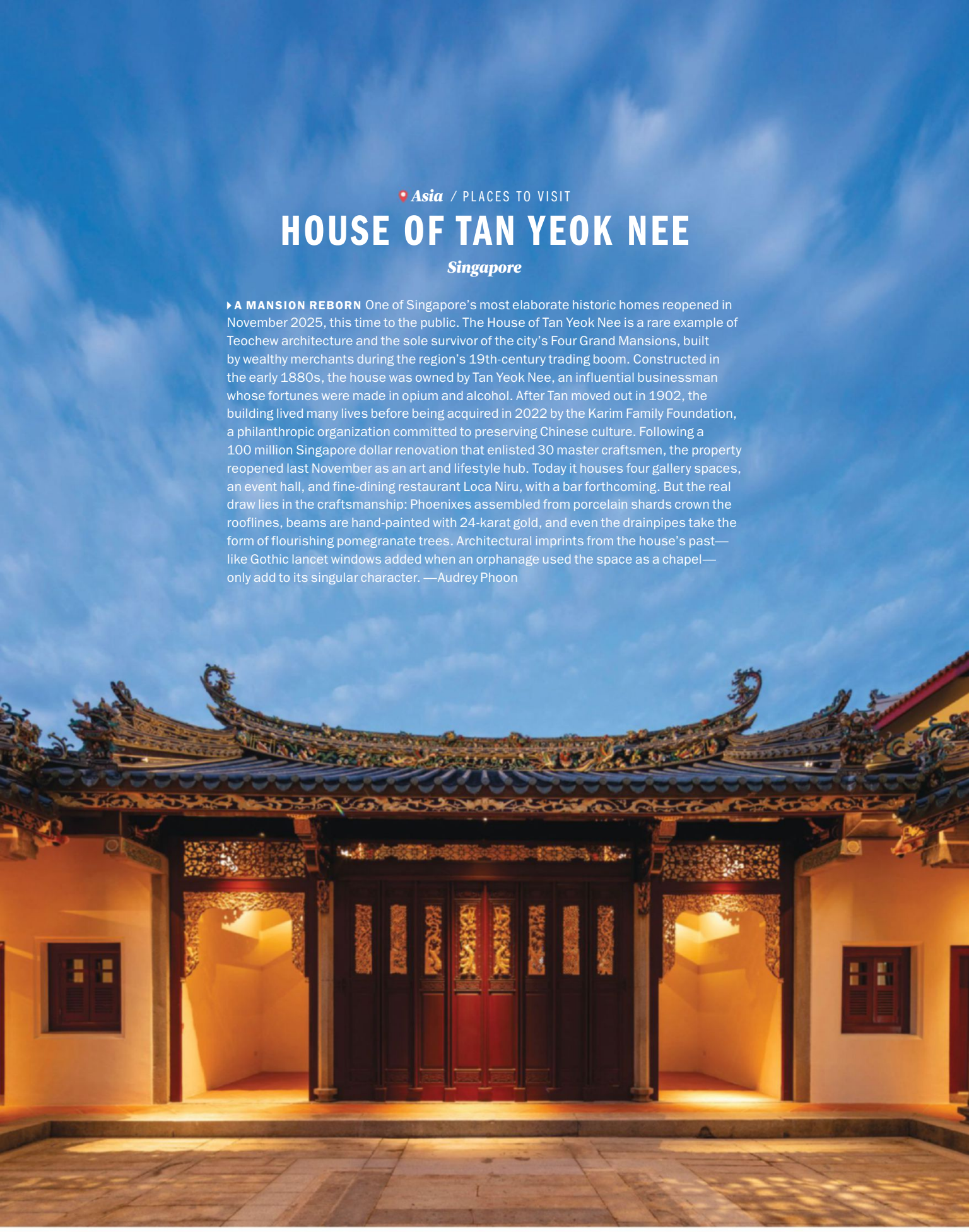
New Delhi, India

CHEERS TO THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE Delhi has no shortage of places to drink, but the three-story Aabbcc—which opened in summer 2025 in the upscale neighborhood of Vasant Vihar—aims to be more than a bar. The experience begins on the mezzanine—part laboratory, part museum—where roots, herbs, teas, fruits, and spices sit alongside more unexpected ingredients, including honey-bred black ants used as garnishes—an introduction to the thinking behind the drinks to follow. One floor up, the Observation Cell serves as the main bar and dining room, anchored by an omakase-style counter with just 10 seats. Cocktails are organized by time. *Yesterday* revisits classics with modern technique, from a reworked Long Island Iced Tea to a refined Appletini. *Today* blends global influences with local flavors (to wit: the tropical Ube Colada), while *Tomorrow* leans fully experimental with creations like Where's My Rice, a tequila-based riff on Thai curry, and Charred Aubergine, a ginny nod to *baingan ka bharta* (roasted eggplant). The journey culminates in the AMP Room, a listening lounge for high-fidelity electronic music and events. This year, a private dining concept called Six will debut here, pairing cocktails with a six-course menu inspired by India's six seasons. —Poonam Binayak

HOUSE OF TAN YEOK NEE

Singapore

A MANSION REBORN One of Singapore's most elaborate historic homes reopened in November 2025, this time to the public. The House of Tan Yeok Nee is a rare example of Teochew architecture and the sole survivor of the city's Four Grand Mansions, built by wealthy merchants during the region's 19th-century trading boom. Constructed in the early 1880s, the house was owned by Tan Yeok Nee, an influential businessman whose fortunes were made in opium and alcohol. After Tan moved out in 1902, the building lived many lives before being acquired in 2022 by the Karim Family Foundation, a philanthropic organization committed to preserving Chinese culture. Following a 100 million Singapore dollar renovation that enlisted 30 master craftsmen, the property reopened last November as an art and lifestyle hub. Today it houses four gallery spaces, an event hall, and fine-dining restaurant Loca Niru, with a bar forthcoming. But the real draw lies in the craftsmanship: Phoenixes assembled from porcelain shards crown the rooflines, beams are hand-painted with 24-karat gold, and even the drainpipes take the form of flourishing pomegranate trees. Architectural imprints from the house's past—like Gothic lancet windows added when an orphanage used the space as a chapel—only add to its singular character. —Audrey Phoon



Asia / PLACES TO VISIT

DAIDIB DAIDEE

Pua, Thailand

COMING HOME WITH PURPOSE Across Thailand, some Millennials and Zoomers are returning from their universities and careers to build small businesses grounded in local tradition and community. One of the most intimate examples is Daidib Daidee, an off-the-grid farm stay in Nan province, near the Laos border. Drawing on experience he gained in Chiang Mai, Adisak "Bird" Yanan transformed his family's 1.5-acre farm into a back-to-nature retreat he now runs alongside his parents. Visitors arrive by tractor; sleep in mosquito-netted, open-air huts or a simple eight-person dormitory; and join in daily farm chores: tending the rice paddy, harvesting cucumbers and passion fruit, bathing water buffalo, and helping prepare meals like konjac-root salad and spicy eggplant. While many travelers first encounter DaiDib DaiDee as day trippers, lured by Bird's wood-fired pizzas served at his tiny rice-field-side, reservation-only restaurant, the overnight stay is where the farm's full intention comes into focus. —Johanna Read

Asia / PLACES TO VISIT

CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ARTS TASHKENT

Tashkent, Uzbekistan

A NEW ANCHOR FOR CENTRAL ASIAN ART The art world's eyes converged on Uzbekistan last fall as the inaugural Bukhara Biennale debuted and Uzbek cultural leader Gayane Umerova, chair of the Uzbekistan Art and Culture Development Foundation, was determined that the moment wouldn't be fleeting. Centuries after the city's heyday as a Silk Roads junction, the Centre for Contemporary Arts Tashkent opens this year in the capital, housed in a former tram depot and diesel station transformed by French architects Studio KO. Inside, an international roster for the center's inaugural exhibition, "Hikmah," includes seventh-generation Uzbek ceramicist Shokhrukh Rakhimov, Korean conceptual artist Kimsooja, Tunisian sculptor Nadia Kaabi-Linke, and Saudi artist Muhannad Shono. The opening signals a broader cultural shift: With the Almaty Museum of Arts launching in Kazakhstan last year and a Tadao Ando-designed National Museum of Uzbekistan slated for 2028, Central Asia is staking a visible claim in the global contemporary art circuit. —Sarah Khan

Asia / PLACES TO VISIT

KHAO YAI ART FOREST

Pong Ta Long, Thailand

ART RECLAIMS A FOREST Thailand's contemporary art scene is booming—and not only in Bangkok. One of the most ambitious new projects to open last year was Khao Yai Art Forest, an 89-acre open-air museum set on formerly deforested land near Khao Yai National Park, about a three-hour drive from the capital. The project was launched by Bangkok-based philanthropist Marisa Chearavanont and Italian architect-turned curator Stefano Rabolli Pansera, with a mission that pairs contemporary art with land regeneration. Today, visitors encounter a bamboo café and works scattered across a landscape of paddy fields, jungle, and wooded hills. Highlights include *Fog Landscape #48435* by Japanese artist Fujiko Nakaya, which periodically releases a thick mist, and *K-Bar*, a small building reached by a path through wild grass by Berlin-based Elmgreen & Dragset, the artists behind the iconic Prada store sculptural art installation near Marfa, Texas. Up next is a sound installation by French duo Scenocosme and a monumental earthwork by Colombian artist Delcy Morelos, set to open later this year, featuring a 1,000 ft. long communal table beneath a floating roof. —Gisela Williams

HUAJIANG GRAND CANYON BRIDGE

Guizhou, China

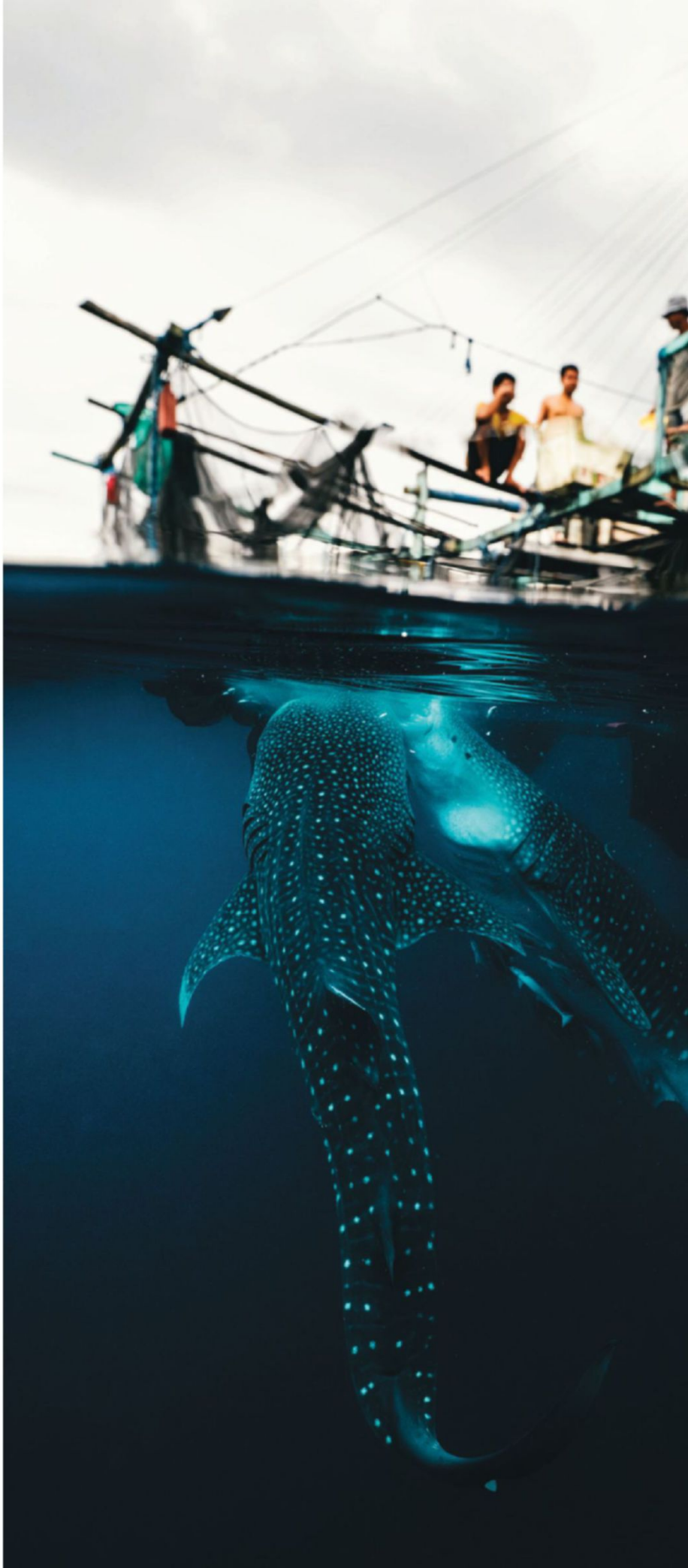
AN ENGINEERING MARVEL WITH PURPOSE Opened on September 28, 2025, the Huajiang Grand Canyon Bridge is the world's highest bridge deck, soaring roughly 2,050 ft. above the Beipan River and spanning some 4,658 ft. The record is impressive—but the impact is more profound. A crossing that once required hours of winding mountain travel through Guizhou, one of China's most remote provinces, is now reduced to an easy two-minute trip. The bridge anchors a broader wave of high-altitude infrastructure and tourism designed to better integrate the Bouyei-Miao Autonomous Prefecture, where ethnic Miao and Bouyei communities have lived for centuries, with the rest of the country. In recent years, China has pursued engineering spectacles not just as symbols of technological prowess, but as practical tools to modernize remote regions and fuel domestic tourism. Here, visitors can walk a glass sky bridge suspended over the canyon, ride a 679-ft. glass elevator to a panoramic sky café, explore nearby traditional villages, or try emerging attractions like bungee jumping and a giant swing.
—Sucheta Rawal

SILOLONA SOJOURNS *SI DATU BUA*

Cenderawasih Bay, Indonesia

FACE-TO-FACE WITH AQUATIC GIANTS

If swimming alongside a 25-ft. whale shark is a humbling experience, what does that make being encircled by seven of them? That rare possibility draws travelers to Teluk Cenderawasih National Park—and to journeys aboard *Si Datu Bua*, a three-cabin phinisi yacht operated by Bali-based Silolona Sojourns, which offers private charters through one of the world's richest whale shark habitats. Cenderawasih Bay is a known gathering spot for the gentle aquatic megafauna, with rangers recording more than 500 whale sharks in these tropical waters in 2025 alone. Exploring the region's islands and biodiverse ecosystems—home to more than 200 coral species and 800 varieties of fish—is best done by sea. Protecting the species is a central focus of Konservasi Indonesia, which last year developed the National Whale Shark Action Plan to prioritize mitigating vessel collisions, establishing responsible tourism standards, and certifying tour operators—making travel with responsible outfits like Silolona one of the most meaningful ways visitors can contribute to conservation efforts. Crafted by Konjo boat builders, *Si Datu Bua* features crimson-red sails, teak cabins lined with Indonesian artisan crafts, and ample lounging space. Guests enjoy fusion cuisine and customized itineraries, but the yacht's greatest luxury may be its exclusivity: the chance to experience the marine wonders of Cenderawasih Bay with hardly another tourist in sight. —Matt Dutile



Asia / PLACES TO VISIT

ISE-JINGU

Ise, Japan

A RARE INVITATION TO A SACRED RITUAL "There's nothing to see and they won't let you see it." So wrote 19th-century Japan-based author Basil Chamberlain after visiting Ise-Jingu, the country's most important Shinto shrine—and still a pinnacle of architectural understatement today. But looks can be deceiving. Set about two hours from Kyoto, the densely forested grounds span an area approximately the size of Manhattan and encompass 125 shrines, along with sacred torii gates, wooden bridges, moss-covered walls, and shrines nested within shrines. At its heart stands the unadorned Inner Shrine, Kotai Jingu, believed to have been founded some 2,000 years ago by Princess Yamatohime to enshrine the sun goddess Amaterasu. Built entirely of Japanese cypress and assembled without metal nails or screws, it has been ritually dismantled and rebuilt every 20 years for more than 1,300 years, in keeping with Shinto tradition. This year marks a rare shift in access. Visitors have been invited to take part in select ceremonies tied to the ongoing Shikinen Sengu rebuilding cycle, including hauling freshly cut lumber and donning white *happi* clothing. Those not participating can still observe key moments in the process, including the Okihiki ceremonies scheduled on select dates through August 2026, with additional events planned for 2027. Watching the solemn processions—or joining in the traditional work chants—is free and open to the public, though arriving early is advised to secure a spot along the Isuzu River near the Inner Shrine and witness a ritual that has quietly shaped Japan's spiritual life for centuries. —Adam H. Graham

RATNANGE TRAIL CENTER

Phaplu, Nepal

A NEW KIND OF HIMALAYAN ADVENTURE Near Mount Everest, a high-speed grassroots movement is taking hold: mountain biking. The nonprofit Phaplu Mountain Bike Club—named after the village where it was founded in Nepal's Solukhumbu District—initially began as a way to engage local youth. "As [mountain biking] tourism expands in Nepal, we hope to give our children the skills and tools to lead the growth," says co-founder Ang Tshering Lama. Since 2023, the Ratnange Trail Center has grown into a 43-mile network of thrilling pathways, including three new routes added in 2025, and two more currently being built. Riders of all experience levels can get a taste of the terrain in two main ways. Nepali-owned Beyul Experiences arranges half-day mountain biking outings alongside yoga retreats, cultural tours, hiking, and helicopter trips with aerial views of Everest. Dedicated enthusiasts, meanwhile, should look to Enduro MTB Nepal, which runs 14-day, soup-to-nuts itineraries focused on the sport. Overnight stays in local homesteads are encouraged, both to support small businesses and to sample hearty home-cooked meals like *shakpa* stews or dumplings called *momos*. The scene is gaining international attention, too: The newcomer Enduro Ratnange race, which takes place each December, has already drawn Olympic-level cyclists. —Samantha Falewée

Asia / PLACES TO VISIT

RAINFOREST WILD ASIA

Mandai, Singapore

THE ZOO OF THE FUTURE IS HERE Rainforest Wild Asia doesn't look much like a zoo—and that's the point. Singapore's newest wildlife park is a radical take on traditional zoo tourism, with open habitats where animals roam freely and adventure-driven experiences designed to pull humans deeper into the landscape. Guests can hike forest trails or attempt the 66-ft. Canopy Jump, plunging—safely harnessed—toward the treetops below. Technology underpins the experience. AI-powered systems embedded within habitats support animal enrichment, using sound, scent, and food cues to encourage natural movement. The same system connects to the Mandai app, alerting visitors when animals are active nearby and increasing the chances of a front-row encounter. Other innovations include robotic vehicles that deliver food to enclosures and smart environmental monitors that track habitat conditions in real-time, enabling staff to respond quickly to potential issues. Within the Mandai Wildlife Reserve—which also includes the Singapore Zoo, Night Safari, and newly opened Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree—Rainforest Wild Asia points toward a future where conservation and technology share the same terrain. —Audrey Phoon

Asia / PLACES TO VISIT

KAWAY'AN ECOPARK

Cavite, Philippines

REFRAMING BAMBOO ARCHITECTURE Conceived as a family-friendly farm and learning center built almost entirely from bamboo, Kaway'an EcoPark is the culmination of a long-held vision by entrepreneur Rosie Tsai, developed in close collaboration with architect Elora Hardy. Tsai has likened bamboo—remarkably strong and resilient—to the Filipino spirit, and together the pair set out to reframe the material, often dismissed in the Philippines as "poor man's timber," as a foundation for climate-resilient design and outdoor education. Kaway'an, which means bamboo in Tagalog, is an oasis that includes a 4,900-sq.-ft. open-air Grand Pavilion—engineered with a steel skeleton to withstand typhoons—and the swooping Marajuyo Bridge, which arches over a lagoon. Visitors meander through the permaculture gardens, picnic on the vast lawns, go boating or horseback riding, birdwatch, take yoga classes, or, naturally, participate in the workshops on bamboo farming. —Cynthia Rosenfeld

Africa / PLACES TO STAY

PARK HYATT JOHANNESBURG

Johannesburg, South Africa

WORTH MORE THAN A STOPOVER Johannesburg has long been a destination for business travelers—and a common layover for leisure visitors en route to safari. With the opening of Park Hyatt Johannesburg, however, travelers may finally have more reason to linger. Set in the central suburb of Rosebank, not far from new cultural spaces Gallery 1 at Keyes Art Mile and Standard Bank Art Lab, the hotel brings a level of boutique service still rare in the city. Guests can be met at the airport by a private driver, then ushered into a discreet lobby where check-in takes place in a private room. Though there's a big brand behind it, the boutique property doesn't lack personality. Housed in a mansion from the 1930s and designed by Johannesburg-based interiors whiz Stephen Falcke, its 31 slick rooms and suites are outfitted with green tub chairs, marble-topped credenzas, Ndebele-patterned throws, and glass-encased bathrooms. Room 32, the hotel's restaurant, has quickly become a favorite among locals—particularly for high tea, where a treasure chest reveals tiny bites tucked in drawers, from bunny chow to venison carpaccio, served on a terrace overlooking a heated pool framed with greenery. Dinner is equally compelling, with dishes like Karoo lamb cutlets and milk tart mille-feuille, paired with stellar syrahs and chardonnays from the Cape. —Mary Holland

Africa / PLACES TO STAY

MASIYA'S CAMP AT ROYAL MALEWANE

Kruger National Park, South Africa

SAFARI IN STYLE Game drives: check. Big Five sightings: check. Sundowners in the bush: check. Hot-pink tents: … also check. The candy-colored canvas at the new six-suite Masiya's Camp at Royal Malewane, just outside Kruger National Park, is the brainchild of owner Liz Biden, whose fearless sensibility has made her Royal Portfolio properties cult favorites among design lovers. Named for Royal Malewane's beloved master tracker Wilson Masiya, who died in 2015, Masiya's Camp gleefully flips safari clichés on their heads with striped walls, jewel-toned furnishings, Persian rugs underfoot, and a standout African art collection. Traditionalists may mourn the loss of khaki and dusty animal hides—but once you settle onto a teal-and-fuchsia ikat bar stool, you won't miss them for a second. —Sarah Khan

ANDBEYOND SUYIAN LODGE

Suyian Conservancy, Kenya

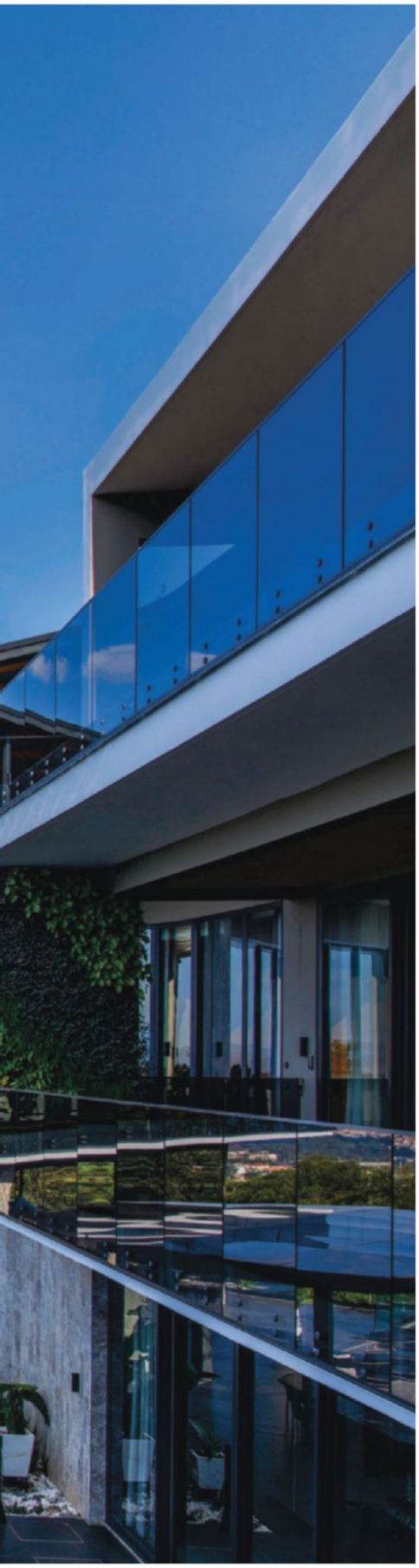
EXCLUSIVE ACCESS TO A VAST CONSERVANCY Perched on the eastern escarpment of the Great Rift Valley, with Mount Kenya on the horizon and expansive views of granite kopjes, giraffe-dotted plains, and the winding Ewaso Narok River below, andBeyond Suyian Lodge opened in July 2025 in Kenya's lesser-visited Laikipia region. It is the sole camp within the unfenced 44,000-acre Suyian Conservancy, a former cattle ranch that now serves as a vital wildlife corridor linking Laikipia to northern conservancies. The exclusive access allows for unusually varied encounters, from tracking wild dogs or the elusive black leopard on twice-daily game drives and spotting a Verreaux eagle on a guided walk to encountering the spectacularly striped Grévy's zebra on horseback safari. Back at the lodge, grass-topped structures echo the area's distinctive rock formations. The communal spaces and 14 suites blend textured stone, indigenous plants, and neutral tones, each offering striking views from morning coffee to evening sundowner. And the camp partners with international conservation organization Space for Giants to support wildlife protection and local communities. —Rebekah Peppler

Africa / PLACES TO STAY

THE PINNACLE KIGALI

Kigali, Rwanda

KIGALI COMES INTO ITS OWN This January, The Pinnacle Kigali made its debut as Rwanda's first women-led ultra-luxury hotel. Originally created by East African entrepreneur Sheila Kyarisiima to serve as her family home, the hilltop sanctuary offers sweeping views over Kigali and complimentary in-suite massages upon arrival. Each of the nine guestrooms tears a page from Kyarisiima's story: the "Lavish Lair," for instance, nods to sleek New York City, where she met her partner. Amenities—among them a saltwater infinity pool, spa, padel courts, a four-lane bowling alley, and a Dolby Atmos cinema—elevate the hotel from simple stopover to destination retreat. The Pinnacle's arrival mirrors Kigali's broader evolution, driven by sustainable design and a flourishing creative scene. Nearby, hyperlocal ingredients shine at Kevin Mbundu's stylish cocktail bar and restaurant Ruä; fashion innovators at Haute Baso are gaining international attention; and tailors at Kimironko Market still produce bespoke kitenge. After hosting cycling's first African UCI Road World Championships last year—and with an international airport set to open by 2028—Kigali is emerging as a city that rewards lingering, not merely a gateway to gorilla trekking. The Pinnacle makes a compelling case to kick off your safari boots and stay awhile. —Vanita Salisbury



Africa / PLACES TO STAY

JNANE KARWAN

Marrakesh, Morocco

A DIFFERENT KIND OF DESERT CAMP Marrakesh's zellige-tiled design scene is booming. But in a year packed with new openings—Jnane Rumi, Casa Memoria Marrakech, Riad El Aaíun, and Mellah Hotel among them—one newcomer stands apart. Opened in October 2025 in the city's Palmeraie neighborhood, Jnane Karwan is a tented desert retreat conceived by Senegalese-West Indian hospitality pioneer and *Inside Marrakech* author Meryanne Loum-Martin to elevate Amazigh (Berber nomad) culture, known for encampments across the Sahara Desert and Atlas Mountains. Set among rammed-earth ruins on land neighboring Loum-Martin's long-celebrated Jnane Tamsna, Karwan comprises five tents—four for guests, including two with private pools, plus a gallery space for events—furnished with art and antiques from across the Maghreb. The name *jnane*, meaning "garden paradise" or "peaceful sanctuary," reflects both the setting and the spirit: Guests have run of the oasis, from the heated swimming pool to shaded gathering spaces designed for conversation and reflection. Programming is central to the experience, with events like Loum-Martin's annual Diaspora Salon bringing artists, writers, and cultural figures of African ancestry together on site. It's this blend of place, purpose, and lived culture that makes Jnane Karwan one of Marrakesh's most meaningful new stays. —Cynthia Rosenfeld

AMURA

Cape Town, South Africa

THE CHEF OF THE SEA CHARTS NEW WATERS By turning mussels into blood sausage, reimagining tuna as a kind of fish *jamón*, and foraging cereals from the ocean floor, Ángel León helped redefine the possibilities of seafood-driven cuisine, establishing himself as one of the most influential names in contemporary gastronomy. The Andalusian chef—who went on to create a three-Michelin-star temple to the sea in Puerto de Santa María—has now crossed to the South Atlantic for his first project outside Spain. Set inside Cape Town's storied Mount Nelson Hotel and designed to evoke South Africa's kelp forests, Amura presents a new challenge for León, long known as El Chef del Mar. Here, a new continent becomes his canvas. Local kingklip is served fresh with a Spanish *pilpil* enriched with plankton; abalone, deeply tied to South Africa's coast, is paired with an emulsion of Gordal olives; and shrimp toast, inflected with Durban's curry-laden maritime heritage, has struck a chord with local diners. León also grounds the menu in personal history, paying homage to his family's maritime roots with Cádiz-style squid-ink croquettes served with aioli. —Rafael Tonon

GRAND EGYPTIAN MUSEUM

Cairo, Egypt

A NEW ERA FOR ANCIENT EGYPT

Two decades after groundbreaking, the Grand Egyptian Museum finally opened last November—roughly the same amount of time it took to build the Great Pyramid next door. Spanning 5.4 million square feet and housing some 100,000 artifacts representing 7,000 years of history, the long-awaited venue is expected to be a shot in the arm for Egypt's flagging tourism sector after years of economic and political turbulence that left Nile cruise ships idled and visitor numbers depressed. Sheer scale aside, the museum represents a shift in stewardship. Secure, climate-controlled galleries allow Egypt to better conserve its antiquities, and strengthen efforts to see major works returned from overseas collections. The literal crown jewel is the first complete public display of all artifacts from the tomb of Tutankhamun since its discovery in 1922. Officials expect the museum to draw as many as 8 million visitors annually, supporting an ambitious national goal to double tourism by 2030. For many travelers, the draw is simple and profound: seeing Egypt's most famous treasures where they belong. —Scott Laird

Australia & Oceania

PLACES TO STAY

SEA SEA HOTEL

Crescent Head, Australia

A SURF MOTEL DONE RIGHT Retro motel revivals have become a staple of modern travel, but few pull off the concept as well as Sea Sea Hotel, set on Dunghutti Country in the laid-back surf town of Crescent Head—about an hour by air or five hours by road from Sydney. The property, which opened at the end of 2024, celebrates the area's '70s surf culture: Think brown-brick studios and suites with block-print bedspreads, timber wall panels, and bedside speakers thrumming with The Stone Roses. The hotel is the brainchild of George Gorrow, former creative director of Australian denim label Ksubi and co-owner of boutique inn The Slow in Bali, and his wife, ceramicist and model Cisco Tschurtschenthaler. Every detail has been meticulously considered, from embroidered linen bathrobes and classic surfboards for rent to the restaurant's modern Australian menu by chef Daniel Medcalf, formerly of Sydney's Icebergs Dining Room and Bar. Not a surfer? One of Australia's best dive sites, Fish Rock Cave, lies 40 minutes away; new mountain bike trails have opened in the nearby state forest, south of Kempsey; and the first stage of a 49-mile trek linking four national parks is slated to open nearby in mid-2026. —Rachel Lees

Australia & Oceania / PLACES TO STAY

FLOCKHILL

Craigieburn Valley, New Zealand

WILD FOOD, OPEN FLAME If you've ever wanted a national park to yourself, Flockhill comes close. The 36,000-acre historic sheep station, nestled in New Zealand's Southern Alps, has become one of the South Island's most coveted retreats. The original four-bedroom homestead is now joined by seven standalone villas, where wool throws, glowing fireplaces, and cozy indoor and outdoor living spaces open onto uninterrupted mountain views. At the heart of the lodge is Sugarloaf, an open kitchen and dining room led by New Zealand-born, European-trained chef Taylor Cullen, who returned home to run the property with his family. For the ultimate experience, book the Chef's Table, where Cullen and his team cook over an open flame using ingredients foraged nearby, grown in the garden, or drawn from the onsite "ferment library"—coprosma berries, edible pine, wild hare, venison, and eel among them. Beyond the table, the station and surrounding area are a playground for fishing, rock-climbing, horseback riding, and e-biking. Recovery comes at the new wellness spa, with sauna, cold plunge, and hot pool facing Sugarloaf Peak. —Nora Walsh

TALA

Auckland, New Zealand

A SINGULAR SAMOAN TABLE In his intimate 20-seat restaurant, chef Henry Onesemo applies modern techniques to ancient Samoan ingredients, telling stories of home through food. Opened in 2023 by Onesemo and his wife Debby, Tala has helped pave the way for more culturally specific dining in New Zealand, earning praise across Oceania for its singular focus. Born and raised in Samoa, Onesemo draws directly from *Fa'a Samoa*—the Samoan way—rejecting catch-all fusion labels. "I'd rather be uniquely specific than generally Pacific," he says. At Tala (Samoan for "story"), that specificity comes through in two tasting menus: the Chef's Journey, served at the counter, and the shorter Fāgogo Journey in the main dining room. Dishes include *panikeke* (Samoan pancake), *vaisu* (steamed shellfish with coconut milk), and *umu* chicken, wrapped in banana leaves and cooked in a traditional hot-stone oven. Desserts like Copra—inspired by the smoky aroma of coconut oil production—root the experience firmly in place. The meal closes with *apa fafano*, a ceremonial hand-washing that reflects Tala's guiding values: respect, service, and gratitude. It's a quiet but powerful statement—one that positions Samoan food not as a subset of something broader, but as a cuisine that deserves to stand on its own. —Jill K. Robinson

ON BOARD TASMANIAN EXPEDITION CRUISES

Tasmania, Australia

CRUISING WHERE THE ROAD ENDS If you want to breathe some of the purest air on Earth—in a place with no access roads, towns, or hotels—head to Tasmania's Southwest National Park for a new two-night Port Davey Highlights cruise from On Board, a family-run expedition outfit. Tasmania, Australia's island state, remains one of the most remote and protected destinations on the planet, and this compact itinerary makes it possible to experience Port Davey's dramatic headlands, deserted beaches, and pristine waterways on a tight schedule. The journey begins in Hobart with a 40-minute seaplane flight above cinematic wilderness before landing in Bathurst Harbour, where guests board *Odalisque III*, a 12-passenger expedition vessel. Over three days, Tasmanian guides lead excursions to indigenous rock art sites and sea caves on remote islands, as well as rugged coastal hikes with a chance of spotting the endangered orange-bellied parrot. Back on board, guests retreat to the catamaran's cushy lounge to snack on freshly baked raspberry-jam-and-vanilla-cream biscuits and sip Tassie wines and whiskies, before digging into chef-prepared feasts. —Nora Walsh

SYDNEY FISH MARKET

Sydney, Australia

THE BIGGEST CATCH YET In January 2026, Sydneysiders celebrated the rebirth of an icon: The Sydney Fish Market, the city's second-most visited attraction after the Sydney Opera House, reopened after a seven-year reconstruction nearby. Designed by Danish firm 3XN/GXN, the market now brings together dozens of restaurants and cafes, a cooking school, and a working auction house where some 55 tons of seafood change hands daily—making it the Southern Hemisphere's largest. A rippling roof fitted with more than 400 solar panel cassettes helps ventilate heat and harvest rainwater, underscoring the project's sustainability ambitions. Visitors can observe the auction and working wharf, or join guided tours that unpack the market's history. Food lovers will find nearly 40 dining outlets under one roof, from Malaysian favorites at Tam Jiak to Aegean charcoal grilling at Hamsi. More than a food hall, the new market doubles as a civic space, with a 9.3-mile waterfront promenade, connecting Rozelle Bay to Woolloomooloo, one of the longest pedestrian-friendly waterfront trails in the world, and yearlong programs honoring the area's Indigenous heritage, including five permanent art installations. —Michelle Tchea

MURUJUGA CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Pilbara, Australia

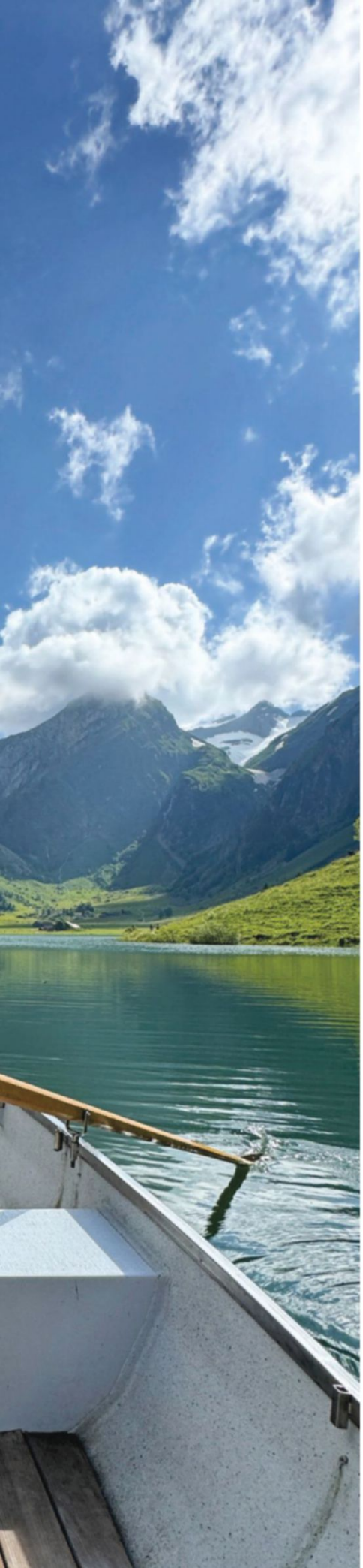
LEGENDS CARVED IN STONE Scattered among the heaping red rock hills of the Pilbara lies the world's densest collection of petroglyphs and megaliths. Older than Stonehenge and the Pyramids of Giza, this extraordinary collection of Indigenous rock carvings—some dating back 50,000 years—earned UNESCO World Heritage status in 2025. Reaching Murujuga requires commitment—Broome is the nearest city with international flights, followed by a nine-hour drive—but the reward is rare access to sacred terrain. Blanketing more than 1,000 square miles across the Burrup Peninsula and 42 islands of the Dampier Archipelago, originally kept by the Ngarda-Ngarli people, the carvings depict endangered species, extinct animals such as the Tasmanian tiger and flat-tailed kangaroo, and what is believed to be the earliest known depiction of the human face. For Indigenous communities and Australians alike, the art remains a living cultural and spiritual record. —M.T.

HUUS QUELL BY APPENZELLER HUUS

Gonten, Switzerland

A NEW MODEL FOR SWISS WELLNESS

Appenzell, in northeastern Switzerland, is best known for its cows, cheese, and painted farmhouses. So when Huus Quell opened as a five-star, cutting-edge wellness retreat here, it stood out. The hotel's main draw is the 23,000-sq.-ft. Quell Spa, one of the most tech-focused wellness centers in the country. Its three levels are anchored by a longevity program that includes cryotherapy, hyperbaric oxygen therapy, infrared treatments, and precision diagnostics the resort says are aimed at cellular regeneration. The spa also includes nine pools, eight saunas, 14 treatment rooms, and a floating yoga platform overlooking the Alpstein massif. Guests have access to Switzerland's largest wine cellar, part of the broader Appenzeller Huus complex, which includes two sister hotels and six dining venues. Owner Jan Schoch describes the property as a "lifestyle wellness community," with programming that ranges from yodeling choirs and alpine foraging to guided mountain bathing. A new cultural forum, set to open later this year, will host concerts, design residencies, and culinary events. All that Huus Quell has to offer signals a shift in Swiss wellness culture: deprivation is out, longevity and endurance is in.
—Devorah Lev-Tov



Europe / PLACES TO STAY

AVANTGARDE REFINED CAVES OF CAPPADOCIA & CREATOPIA

Cappadocia, Turkey

LUXURY SHAPED BY STONE Architect Efe Aydar describes his kulunk-sculpted designs at Avantgarde Refined Caves of Cappadocia as a collaboration with nature, tracing the natural contours of Cappadocia's rock faces rather than imposing upon them. The hotel's 46 quiet-luxury accommodations occupy grottoes carved over centuries by wind and erosion, including five suites set within a 19th-century residence hewn from soft volcanic tuff for the pastor of nearby Aziz Georgios Church—a reminder of the region's Christian and Byzantine heritage. Inside, sinuous light fixtures echo the undulating stone walls, casting a soft glow across earthen-hued interiors. Guests can explore local vineyards, unwind at the 6,000-sq.-ft. cavern spa with traditional Turkish hammams, or engage with Cappadocia's contemporary creative life. Later this year, the Creatopia Arts & Culture Center will open on the property, with a sculpture park, cinema, artist residencies, and live performances. —Cynthia Rosenfield

Europe / PLACES TO STAY

HOTEL PLESNIK

Solčava, Slovenia

FORAGED FLAVORS, ALPINE FINESSE Tucked into Slovenia's remote Logar Valley, a protected glacial basin at the edge of the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, Hotel Plesnik is quietly recasting the idea of alpine dining. In March 2025, the family-run hotel unveiled Restaurant Plesnik, an intimate 18-seat fine-dining room where young chef Tom Čopar, guided by Slovenian culinary pioneer Janez Bratovž, builds tasting menus almost entirely from the surrounding valley. Plates might feature morels growing seasonally behind the hotel, *sirnek* (cottage cheese) fermented and prepared with wild herbs, slow-cooked aromatic lamb, when available, from the neighboring Matk farm, chervil and crispy egg yolk, or Beraževa torba, a breakfast favorite prepared from leftover bread. The rigor of that hyper-local approach and zero-waste philosophy earned the restaurant a Green Michelin Star within months of opening. "We don't cook by seasons, but by weeks," says Bratovž, as menus shift with snowfall, pasture cycles, and the short alpine summers. Away from the table, forest-facing saunas and spring-fed plunges echo the 42-room hotel's same respect for natural rhythms—helping position the Logar Valley as one of Europe's most closely watched test cases for gastronomy-led alpine tourism. —Anja Mutić

Europe / PLACES TO STAY

BLOW UP HALL

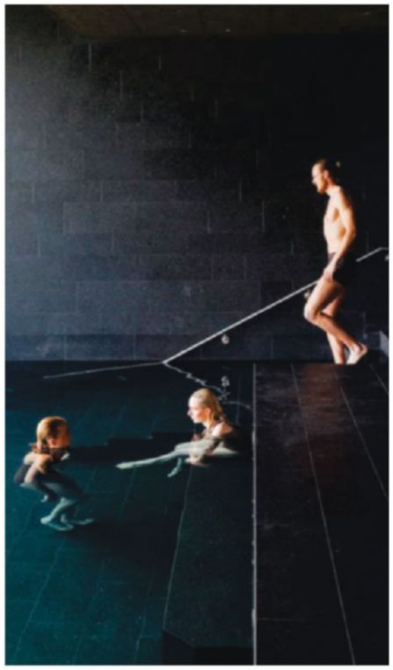
Poznań, Poland

THE ART OF THE ENCORE Sometimes lightning does strike the same place twice. Blow Up Hall first made waves in 2009 as one of Poland's most avant-garde boutique hotels. After a top-to-bottom renovation and under new ownership, it reopened in 2025—and its second act is already outshining its first. Inspired by Michelangelo Antonioni's 1966 countercultural film *Blow-Up*, the hotel treats art not as decoration but as structure. That begins with its setting inside the revived Stary Browar (Old Brewery), whose industrial bones now frame an ever-changing roster of contemporary works curated in collaboration with Polish artists. Installations appear throughout the property, from Ogród ("Garden"), a papier-mâché environment inspired by coral reefs, to sculpture, photography, and ceramics. That same experimental spirit carries into the 21 guest rooms, no two alike, each rendered in elegant minimalism with unexpected flourishes like futuristic lighting or boldly patterned furnishings. Downstairs, the restaurant Arte serves inventive Polish cuisine with French flair, like tangy beets with local sheep's cheese, wild rose, and a dash of coffee. And then there's the location: Poznań, a lively, under-the-radar city on the Warta River, rich in medieval architecture, vodka bars, and creative energy—much like the hotel itself.
—AnneLise Sorensen

VARG SAIL YACHT

Norway

SAILING INTO ARCTIC WINTER With its obsidian-black hull and sails, *Varg* Sail Yacht cuts a striking figure in the wintry fjords of northern Norway. The 62-ft. sailing yacht carries just six guests across three cabins, a deliberate contrast to the cruise-ship behemoths that ply these waters each winter. Built specifically for expeditions above the Arctic Circle, *Varg* is helmed by a three-person crew with deep experience sailing Greenland and Svalbard. High-latitude redundancies include a reinforced bow, strengthened by a steel rod running to the keel for added protection in ice. Inside, the mood is pure hygge: a toasty saloon with a combustion fireplace and wraparound windows for watching the landscape slide past. After days outdoors, guests warm up in a wood-fired sauna below deck or a hot tub up top. New year-round itineraries from Norrøna Adventure range from winter orca and humpback whale safaris in the Barents Sea—when the Northern Lights frequently shimmer overhead—to spring ski-and-sail trips in the Lyngen Alps. Summer brings crowd-free exploration of the Lofoten Archipelago, reaching remote anchorages accessible only by sea. —Terry Ward



Europe / PLACES TO STAY

RESS SPA

Tórshavn, Faroe Islands

AN ALL-WEATHER BATHHOUSE Unlike its Nordic neighbors, the Faroe Islands, between Norway and Iceland, never developed a formal spa tradition—unless you count outdoor immersion in wind, rain, and chilly North Atlantic currents. That environment shapes the philosophy behind Ress Spa, the archipelago's first and only spa, which debuted a new purpose-built spa house at Hotel Føroyar last July. After showering and changing into uniform bathing suits, guests walk outdoors along a path carved into the landscape. Inside, the steam room releases mineral-rich vapor from superheated volcanic stones, while relaxation spaces frame sweeping views of the surrounding terrain. Then guests can move back outside, whether to the rooftop infinity-edge hot pool or a ground-level indoor-outdoor pool with hilltop views of Tórshavn harbor and its pine forest. In both, bathers hover between warm water and open air—embracing whatever conditions the islands deliver that day. —Scott Laird

Europe / PLACES TO STAY

ALIÉE ISTANBUL

Istanbul, Turkey

A NEW VIEW OF ISTANBUL For more than a century, the former military shipyard along Istanbul's Golden Horn was off-limits. Its reopening as Aliée Istanbul—which debuted in September 2025—marks one of the city's most intriguing transformations, offering a contemporary counterpoint in a city largely defined by its past. A soaring glass-roofed courtyard marries Ottoman-era stone walls with permanent and rotating art installations. The 100 rooms and 22 serviced apartments lean modern, with copper bathtubs and lagoon-style pools lining the Horn. A 43,000-sq.-ft. spa anchors the property with Russian banya, Finnish sauna, and Turkish hammam, plus a cryo suite and personalized biohacking programs, while its five restaurants range from swim clubs to neo-cabarets. What truly sets Aliée apart, though, is its relationship to the water. Guests can take complimentary rowing lessons with championship-level instructors or set out by private boat, sailing past minarets and shipyards that once powered the Ottoman Empire. —Erin Levi

V&A EAST STOREHOUSE

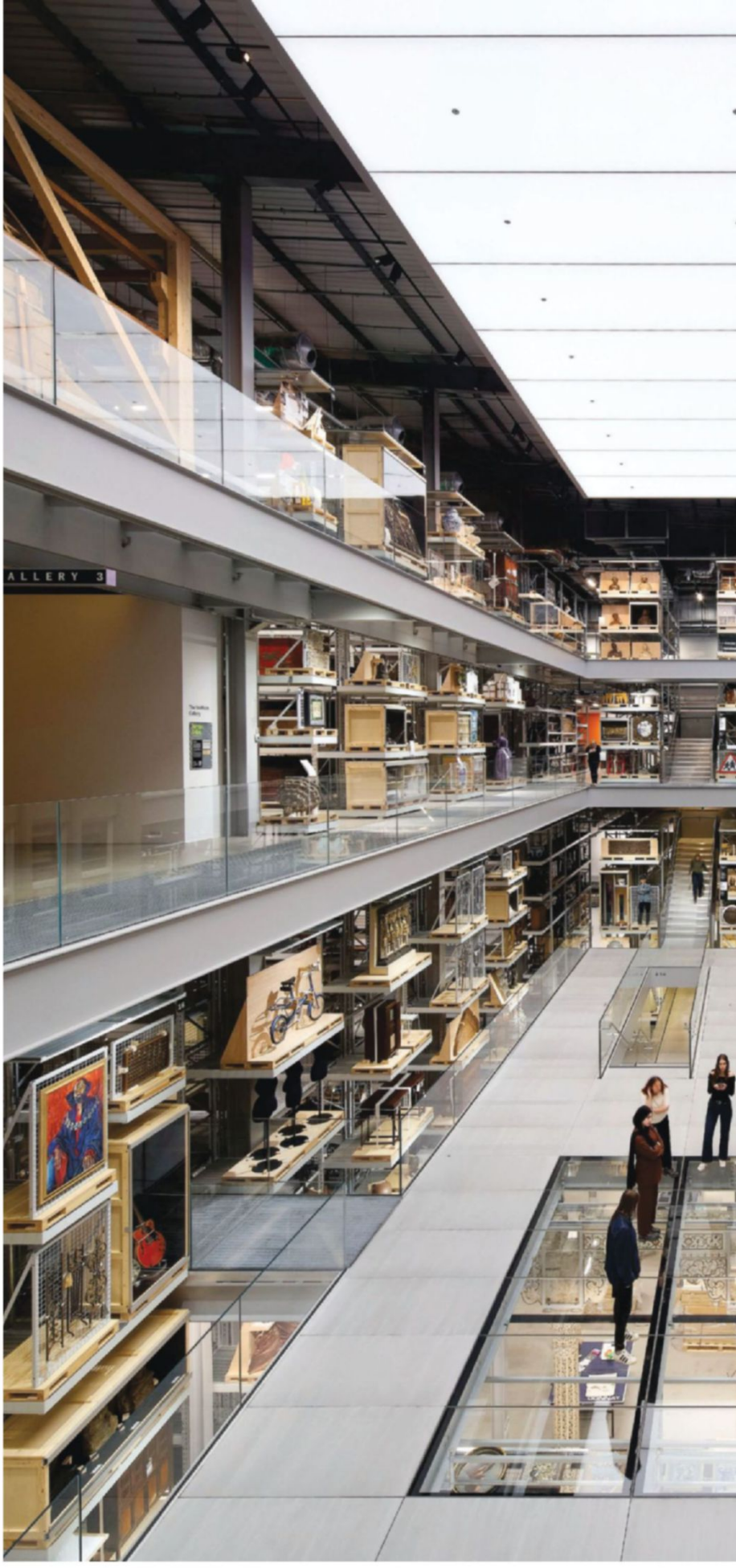
London, England

A MUSEUM WHERE THE COLLECTION COMES TO YOU At a time when many museums' permanent collections have so far outgrown their galleries that only a fraction of their holdings can ever be exhibited at once, the new V&A East Storehouse is taking a radically different approach.

Opened in London's East Bank cultural district in May 2025, the newest offshoot of the world-famous Victoria & Albert Museum reimagines the museum-going experience as a two-way conversation, not a top-down monologue. It's an ambitious hybrid: part storage facility, part research center, part interactive public access point for the V&A's vast collection of decorative arts and design objects. The real game-changer is the Order an Object system, which lets guests search a digital catalog of more than half a million items and select up to five pieces to be pulled from the shelves and presented one-on-one by a museum staffer for up-close inspection during a future visit.

"The vision for Order an Object was to bring people closer to the V&A's collection than ever before," says Kate Parsons, the V&A's Director of Collections Care and Access. "It was very important that any person could access any object for any reason, even if it was just to see something that made them happy."

The public response has surpassed the museum's high hopes; nearly 30,000 objects have been booked since the opening. "That's 30,000 objects



that otherwise would have remained in storage, unseen," says Parsons. People check items out for all sorts of reasons. Items from the Storehouse's David Bowie Centre, home to the music icon's complete archive of costumes, instruments, and ephemera, have been popular bookings since the collection debuted in September. One person crossed an ocean to view a distant ancestor's wedding dress. And staff are finding visitor requests helpful as a guidepost in deciding future exhibitions.

The Storehouse has inspired a flood of inquiries from other museums interested in following its lead, part of a global push to foster greater interactivity and community access to museum archives. São Paulo Museum of Art (MASP) in Brazil has dramatically expanded its footprint to show more of its collection of European, Brazilian, African, and Indigenous art (only 1% of which was previously on view). In Paris, the Fondation Cartier introduced a dedicated facility for community education and hands-on workshops. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City has developed virtual-reality experiences for both in-person and remote visitors to better examine some of the museum's largest objects, like the ancient Egyptian Temple of Dendur and a Kwoma ceremonial house ceiling from New Guinea.

On April 18, the V&A launched its next collaborative project: the V&A East, a companion museum that will focus on local artists, global culture, and the change-making power of creativity. Developed in partnership with area makers via the V&A East's Youth Collective and other community groups, V&A East celebrated its opening with a festival tied to its inaugural exhibition, "The Music is Black: A British Story." That's just the beginning. —Valerie Rains

Europe / PLACES TO VISIT

ART ZOO MUSEUM

Amsterdam, Netherlands

A *WUNDERKAMMER* GONE WILD In the corner of one of Amsterdam's most elegant 17th-century canal houses, a cheetah leaps from an antique tabernacle. Angry swans brood and colorful birds perch atop old cages. A 16-ft. crocodile hangs from the ceiling. This is Amsterdam's wildest new cultural establishment. Art Zoo Museum elevates taxidermy to high art, arranging hundreds of animals and natural-world objects into quirky *tableaux vivants* inspired by the Dutch Golden Age. The museum was conceived by Dutch taxidermy artists Darwin, Sinke & Van Tongeren—that's Jaap Sinke and Ferry van Tongeren, with "Darwin" added as a nod to their naturalist hero Charles Darwin—who designed the space as a modern-day *wunderkammer*, echoing the curiosity cabinets once found in wealthy European homes. In a cheeky role reversal, visitors step inside massive custom-made cages to view the animals, and skeletons of extinct species confront visitors with questions of human responsibility. (All animals on display died of natural causes while under the care of zoos.) Though the artists have been championed by Damien Hirst, they bypassed the white-cube gallery in favor of an environment that talks back. The canal house—formerly a biblical museum—responds in kind, with religious tomes replaced by a commanding bust of Darwin himself.
—Karen Burshtein

MAID OF SOMERSET

Castle Cary, England

ALL ABOARD FOR AFTERNOON TEA Unlike the latest raft of luxury trains crisscrossing the globe, the Maid of Somerset goes nowhere at all. Ticket-holders find it parked in the garden of the Creamery, a restaurant at Castle Cary Station, in the appletree-lined countryside of southern England. Karen Roos and Koos Bekker of The Newt in Somerset, the eccentric country resort nearby, transformed this 1921 British Pullman into an elegant tea salon last year, polishing its mahogany marquetry and brass fixtures to a period gleam for a mix of Newt guests and village locals. Unlike the stereotypical snooty high tea, the Maid's service is steeped in the good humor—and obsession with quality—that typifies Roos' and Bekker's projects. The friendly attendants prepare 11 loose-leaf teas—a mix of house blends and Prince & Sons selections—and serve finger sandwiches like cucumber and Waterlip, a tangy feta-style cheese made on site at the Creamery. A three-tiered sweets tower follows, featuring cardamom-scented orange cakes and scones paired with The Newt's strawberry-rose preserves. This delightful afternoon costs a reasonable £35—or £45 with a coupe of Sprankel, the sparkling Chardonnay from Bablyonstoren, Roos and Bekker's South African estate. —Adam Erace

Europe / PLACES TO VISIT

LOVE MALMÖ

Malmö, Sweden

SKATEBOARDING FINDS A NEW HOME Philadelphia's skateboarding legacy has executed an epic triple flip over the Atlantic. The city's Love Park—officially John F. Kennedy Plaza—was more than a beloved skate spot; it was an icon. Framed by City Hall and named after Robert Indiana's *Love* sculpture that overlooked the plaza, its ledges, stairs, and curbs were as famous as the community that gathered there (including pro skaters Josh Kalis and Kerry Getz). In 2016, a renovation leveled the plaza, marking the end of an era. Nearly a decade later, the park found a second life in Sweden. Built using original blueprints, salvaged granite, and even a lamppost from Philadelphia, Love Malmö is a rare cross-continental act of skateboarding preservation—and a clever feat of upcycling. The setting matters. In Malmö, skateboarding is embraced not just as a sport but as a social experience; Malmö high school Bryggeriets Gymnasium even offers skateboarding as part of the curriculum. Embedded into the central Triangeln district, Love Malmö is woven into the city's urban fabric, echoing the communal spirit that defined its predecessor. The park's rebirth mirrors skateboarding's own trajectory—from rebellious subculture to the global stage. After a successful debut at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo, the sport will become a permanent core event at the 2028 Games in Los Angeles. —AnneLise Sorensen

Europe / PLACES TO VISIT

FENIX

Rotterdam, Netherlands

A MUSEUM FOR A DIVIDED MOMENT

After being carpet-bombed in World War II, Rotterdam rebuilt itself as a proving ground for ambitious, often unconventional architecture—some of it grappling with contemporary social issues. Its newest showstopper, Fenix, takes on one of the most charged of all: migration. Opening at a moment when immigration debates are roiling Europe and beyond, the museum uses art to frame movement not as an abstraction or a headline, but as a shared human experience. Fenix occupies a century-old warehouse built for the Holland-America Line in the Katendrecht district—once a departure point for millions of emigrants embarking to new lives—that has been restored by Rotterdam's Bureau Polderman. Inside, modern and contemporary works give migration physical form: *Suitcase Maze*, assembled from thousands of donated pieces of luggage, each tied to a personal journey; and a sculpture of a person by Zimbabwean artist Mark Halter constructed from the checkered nylon "go bags" commonly used by migrants. The architecture does its own storytelling. A mirrored, double-helix steel staircase—nicknamed the Tornado—spirals upward in a deliberately disorienting climb, ending with sprawling views of the River Maas and Europe's largest port. The experience extends beyond the galleries, with meals at Plein and a public atrium where cooks share "tastes of home." Guests can complement their museum visit with guided walks through historically multicultural Katendrecht offered by local businesses.

—Karen Burshtein

Europe / PLACES TO VISIT

SMK THY

Doverodde, Denmark

THE NATIONAL GALLERY MOVES WEST The far-flung region of Thy in northwest Jutland reveals Denmark's wild side: a rugged, wave-lashed coast with rolling dunes and tangled forests. But this overlooked area is newly in the spotlight with the August 2025 opening of SMK Thy. Presiding over the verdant banks of the Limfjord strait, it is the first permanent satellite of the Statens Museum for Kunst to open outside Copenhagen, part of a new strategy to broaden access to Denmark's largest art collection. The museum transforms a former merchant's farmhouse and grain silo into light-filled galleries built with reclaimed materials and pavilions that integrate into the surrounding terrain. Nature also shapes the programming: the 2026 exhibition "Seed Savers" spotlights Danish artists exploring local plant life. Beyond SMK Thy, Jutland is buzzing with new openings. In Aarhus, the ARoS art museum unveiled a monumental domed "Skyspace" by James Turrell in June, while an outdoor Art Square launched this spring. Flugt – The Refugee Museum of Denmark, at the former Oksbøl Refugee Camp, will expand with new exhibitions this year. And the region's culinary scene is on the rise, with Michelin stars shining on reimagined New Nordic cooking, including at Pearl, chef Paul Proffitt's restaurant overlooking the Flensborg Fjord. —AnneLise Sorensen

PAZ

Tórshavn, Faroe Islands

WHERE THE FJORD FEEDS YOU If Copenhagen earned its reputation as the Nordic hub of gastronomy, this small restaurant in Tórshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands between Iceland and Norway, is intent on proving that the region's most compelling cooking may lie even farther north. Awarded two Michelin stars within three months of opening, chef Poul Andrias Ziska has turned PAZ into a contemporary testing ground for the islands' extraordinary seafood, drawn from icy waters and appearing even in dessert form (think blue mussel candy or ice cream made from limpet and dulse). Ziska also weaves Faeroese tradition into a distinctly New Nordic sensibility: His take on ræstkjøt, the island's fermented lamb, is deeply mature and pungent, served shredded to pair with a savory swede cream and fermented lingonberries for balance. There's also strictly seasonal fulmar seabird—long part of the Faroese diet—served with velvety beetroot and a mussel sauce. On an island this remote, hyper-local sourcing is essential. Lamb comes from a small producer in Gásadalur; crates of live shellfish are tethered to a pontoon 15 minutes from the restaurant, creating a fjord-to-plate system; and Ziska is also acquiring a small plot of land to grow vegetables for the 2026 season. —Rafael Tonon

Caribbean / PLACES TO STAY

MSC *WORLD AMERICA*

Caribbean Sea

THE ULTIMATE METROPOLIS AT SEA With 22 decks, 39 elevators, seven pools, and space for 6,764 passengers and 2,138 crew, MSC *World America* looks less like a cruise ship than a self-contained city at sea. The largest ship ever launched by MSC Cruises—and the world's eighth-biggest overall—it represents a new class of megaships built to astonish while still carving out moments of intimacy. The excess is deliberate, of course. Dining spans everything from Japanese teppanyaki and Greek tavernas to the only Eataly at sea, while designated bars serve classy gins, healthy juices, and pub-style pints brewed onboard. Families gravitate toward headline attractions like an over-water swing ride that swings passengers 160 ft. above the ocean, and a twisty dry slide running 11 decks deep. A sprawling sportplex hosts basketball, roller skating, and even bumper cars, while the kids' club covers over 10,000 sq. ft. across seven age-specific zones. For a break from packed pools thumping with clubby beats, there's a thermal spa with a Finnish sauna and snow room, plus the exclusive MSC Yacht Club, which offers 24-hour butler service, private dining, and a secluded sundeck. Sailing Caribbean and Bahamas itineraries from Miami, *World America* proves that ambition can be measured not just in size, but in intent. —Ashlea Halpern

Caribbean / PLACES TO STAY

DISNEY *DESTINY*

Caribbean Sea

MARVEL RULES THE HIGH SEAS From the moment passengers step into the Wakanda-inspired Grand Hall—where decorative metalwork on the columns takes cues from Queen Ramonda's crown and a statue of T'Challa holds court—it's clear that Disney *Destiny* is not your typical family cruise. Disney Cruise Line's newest ship, which began sailing in November 2025, is its first heroes-and-villains-themed vessel, with Marvel, Pixar, and Disney characters steering the experience from atrium to aft. At the Worlds of Marvel restaurant, Rocket and Groot oversee a dinner service pairing on-screen storytelling and trivia, while The Sanctum bar channels *Doctor Strange*-style mysticism with cocktails named Vapors of Valtor and Mirror Dimension. *Disney Hercules* features a 24-member cast and an enormous hydra puppet, one of the brand's most technically complex productions at sea. Loki, Cruella de Vil, and Maleficent roam the ship freely, and kids ages 3 to 10 train at the Marvel Super Hero Academy, designing suits and testing powers in virtual missions. The heroics peak in the Iron Man-themed Tower Suite, a two-story penthouse tucked into the forward funnel with a private elevator. The ship sails four- and five-night itineraries from Fort Lauderdale to the Bahamas and western Caribbean, but it isn't the routing that sets it apart; it's how fully the experience caters to adult superfans as well as families. —A.H.

Caribbean / PLACES TO VISIT

LIME OUT ST. THOMAS

Lindbergh Bay, St. Thomas

MAKING WAVES WITH A FLOATING TAQUERIA Slow-braised short ribs with organic microgreens. Jerk-seasoned tuna with chipotle slaw. Smoked paprika black beans with tri-colored quinoa. Not exactly the whatever's-in-the-cooler vibe of a day spent in the Caribbean's almost impossibly turquoise waters. But Lime Out St. Thomas, which opened in November, is anything but ordinary. Serving gourmet tacos and innovative cocktails (mezcal, soursop juice, and fresh lime, anyone?) from a solar-powered 53-ft. boat in Lindbergh Bay, it's the second floating restaurant from childhood friends who grew up on nearby St. John. Buoyed by the success of the original (Lime Out St. John landed on this list in 2019), the team has doubled down on its commitment to the U.S. Virgin Islands, supporting a student scholarship program and sourcing from local farmers. Even landlubbers can partake, thanks to a Taco Taxi that shuttles between Emerald Beach Resort and Lime Out's floating pods. —Jessica Shaw

North America / PLACES TO STAY

SHORTGRASS RESORT

Spearfish, South Dakota

A GREAT PLAINS RETREAT Cofounded by Jared "Cappie" Capp, the Magnolia Network co-host of *Building Outside the Lines*, and scientist Rachel MK Headley, Shortgrass Resort brings an unexpected level of polish to western South Dakota. Open from May through September, the adults-only, family-run retreat is ideally positioned for first-time visitors eager to experience the Black Hills' greatest hits without staying in the thick of it. The property comprises eight bungalows scattered across 52 acres along the Redwater River; the raised-platform suites feature French doors, heated floors and mattress pads, and private decks. Evenings naturally converge over host-led dinners, by the heated pool, or around a crackling fire. Stays include meals at the farm-to-fork Meander restaurant, sustained in part by a 2,000-sq.-ft. greenhouse. Black Hills bucket-listing aside, time here is best spent tubing and fishing on the river, luxuriating in the infrared sauna, or listening to a doleful coyote song under the stars. —Ashlea Halpern

ONE&ONLY MOONLIGHT BASIN

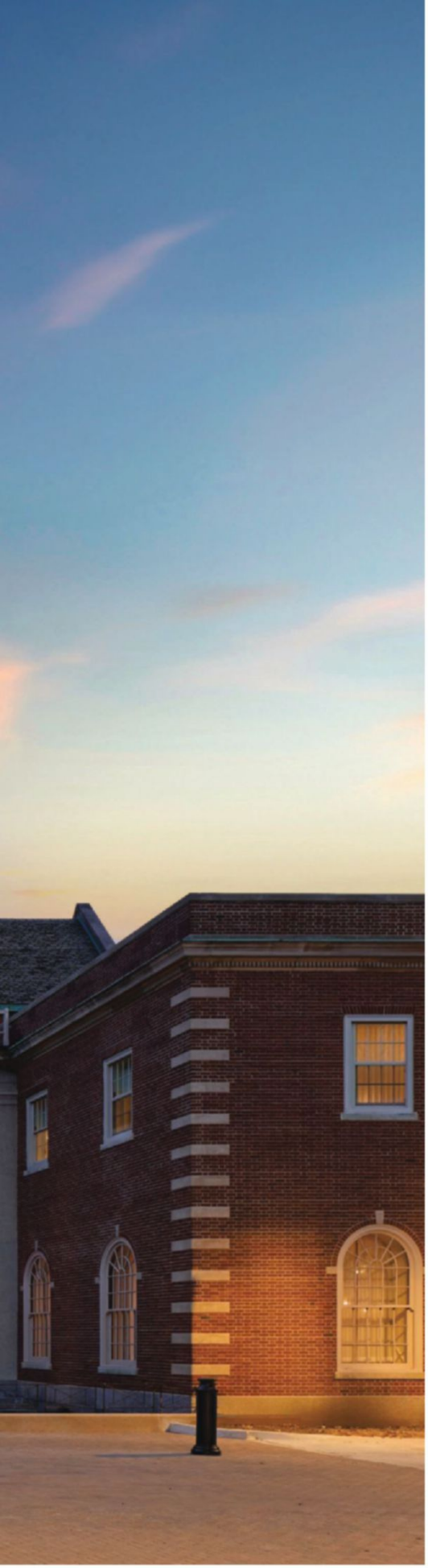
Big Sky, Montana

ASPEN WHO? Nestled on 240 acres in the wilds of southwest Montana, One&Only Moonlight Basin marks the luxury brand's first alpine resort—and a clear play for the most demanding high-net-worth travelers. Opened in late 2025, the 92-key property (73 rooms and suites plus 19 freestanding cabins) was designed by Olson Kundig to feel less like a hotel than an opulent residence, with floor-to-ceiling windows, push-button fireplaces, and closets that would make Joanna Stayton weep. Mornings start with bison congee or a soak in the Japanese-inspired onsen, before attention turns—inevitably—to Lone Peak. Gear rental and ski tuning are handled on site, and a private heated gondola whisks guests directly to Big Sky Resort's Madison Base, the gateway to nearly 6,000 skiable acres. As the sun starts to set, guests head for The Landing, a buzzy après-ski haunt; the low-lit, bootlegger-inspired Dear Josephine cocktail bar; or Akira Back's neo-Japanese steakhouse. But there's no debating the last stop of the night: Moonshack, a speakeasy-style cabin reachable only by ski, snowshoe, fat bike, or heated buggy, with well-heeled guests gathered around a custom poker table, whiskey in hand. —A.H.

DEARBORN INN

Dearborn, Michigan

HISTORY SLEPT HERE In 1931, Henry Ford commissioned one of Detroit's most prolific architects, Albert Kahn, to build a Georgian-style estate hotel for his most prestigious guests. Among them were Eleanor Roosevelt and Walt Disney, who arrived by plane at Ford's Dearborn airport—then a temple of aviation innovation that featured concrete runways and one of the nation's first passenger terminals. Much of Ford's aviation legacy has been lost to time, but the Dearborn Inn endures. Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1982, it reopened last March as part of the Marriott Bonvoy Autograph Collection. Inside, the lobby features American artifacts on loan from The Henry Ford, just down the road. Outside, the hotel's most distinctive draw is a collection of garden suites housed in replica homes Ford commissioned a century ago to honor figures such as Edgar Allen Poe, Walt Whitman, and Patrick Henry. The on-site restaurant, Clara's Table—named for Ford's wife—takes its cues from the surrounding grounds, where wild geese and deer still roam. Step beyond the hedges, however, and Dearborn's culinary scene comes into focus, shaped by generations of immigrants. Yemeni, Syrian, Lebanese, and Turkish kitchens now fill the spaces between the area's old-school red-sauce joints, making the suburb as compelling to eat through as it is to sleep in. —Adam Robb



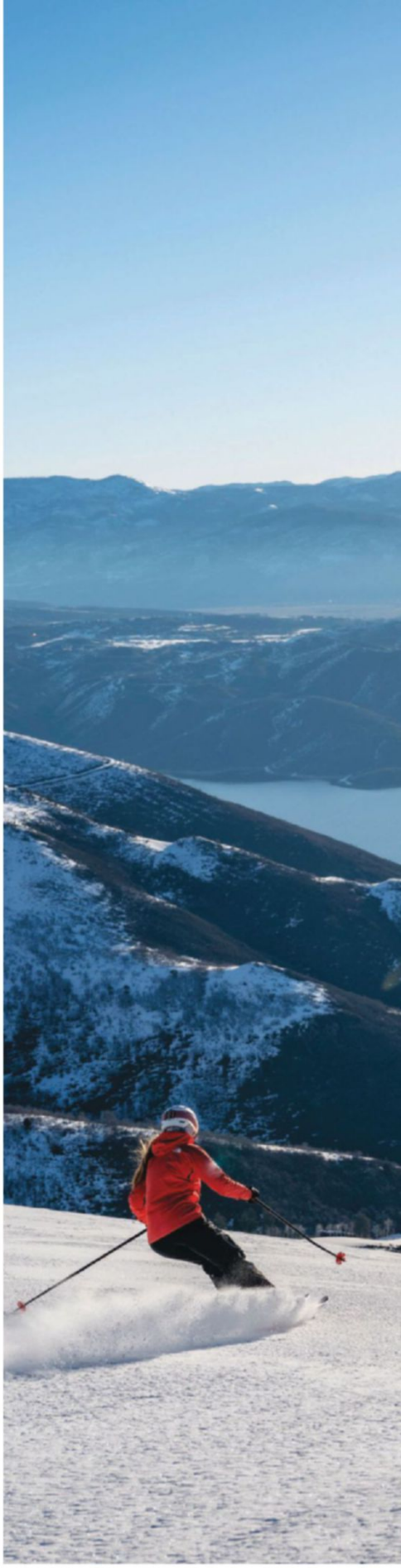
North America / PLACES TO STAY

MOONPASS LOOKOUTS

Wallace, Idaho

PLAYING WITH FIRE TOWERS As the U.S. has shifted to using more advanced technologies to monitor wildfires, historic fire lookouts—remote towers once staffed by human observers scanning for the first signs of fire—are being reimagined as vacation rentals on the federal government's *Recreation.gov* website. In 2017, Boise entrepreneur Kristie Mae Wolfe, who had already developed a following on Airbnb for her whimsical rentals (including one shaped like a potato), bought an out-of-commission lookout on private land in northern Idaho, and refurbished it as a rental—sparking what she calls an "obsession with fire lookouts." Now Wolfe has expanded the business into Moonpass Lookouts: two newly built, 30-ft. towers on 55 forested acres in Wallace, roughly 50 miles east of Coeur d'Alene. Each is topped by a window-walled studio with a wood stove for heat, a skylight for stargazing, and an outdoor walkway that rings the off-grid treehouse. At ground level, a separate cabin houses a bathroom and wood-fired sauna.

Over the next few years, Wolfe plans to add three more towers and a small museum dedicated to the history of fire lookouts. "I sometimes say guests come to do chores," she laughs, noting that hauling firewood and water may be required. "Everyone feels really renewed when they get back to basics." —Elaine Glusac



North America / PLACES TO STAY

QUERCUS

Gay, Georgia

AN ARISTOCRAT'S FARM FANTASY Most visitors to Gay, an hour southwest of Atlanta, come to hunt antiques at the semiannual Cotton Fair, cross Georgia's oldest covered bridge, or tour filming locations from *The Walking Dead*. Since late 2024, a new kind of zombie has appeared in town. Drifting between private wood-fired saunas, cold plunges, and meditative meet-and-greets with resident horses, they're the blissed-out guests of Quercus, a luxurious micro-resort set deep in the countryside. After establishing the biodynamic farm at the heart of the project, nutritionist Chiara Visconti di Modrone and her husband, Angelos Pervanas, built four impeccable cabins—each with indoor-outdoor fireplaces and Frette-dressed mattresses made from organic New Zealand wool—across 3,800 acres of pine forest, cattle pasture, pecan groves, and fishing ponds. With so few guests, Quercus feels less like a hotel than an ag-obsessed aristocrat's country estate—fitting, given Visconti di Modrone's Milanese noble lineage. Not having to tip or sign checks reinforces the fantasy, and the nightly rate covers activities plus three creative, farm-rooted meals daily from chef-partner Ryan Smith, served by a salaried, benefits-earning staff. —Adam Erace

DEER VALLEY RESORT

Park City, Utah

A SKI-ONLY GIANT GETS EVEN BIGGER Amid the constellations of legendary ski resorts that stretch across northern Utah's Wasatch Mountains—most within an hour's drive of Salt Lake City—none are as cruisy or bougie as the ski-only Deer Valley. Now add "extra roomy" following the recent unveiling of 2,900 acres of fresh ski terrain with nearly 100 new ski runs, nine chairlifts, and a 10-passenger gondola spanning three miles. The resort's Expanded Excellence Initiative has more than doubled the size of Deer Valley, now at 4,300 acres, making it the largest single ski resort expansion in North American history. Head straight for the rare high-alpine beginner's area atop 9,350-ft. Park Peak, serving up a slew of gentle runs wrapped in Wasatch panoramas. Or, drop into clouds on advanced groomers on Redemption Ridge and the 4.8-mile Green Monster, one of the longest runs in the country. All of it funnels into a new East Village base area, opening up an access point to Deer Valley that skirts the busy inroads to Park City. Other conveniences include a 1,200-spot parking lot and stays at the Grand Hyatt Deer Valley, opened in 2024 with a spa and a 7,000-sq.-ft. outdoor pool deck. But arguably the best way to experience Deer Valley is from the mid-mountain Stein Erickson Lodge, positioned between the new terrain to the east and the resort's iconic runs to the west—including the famed mogul and aerial venue slated for the 2034 Winter Olympics. For aprés, lock in a reservation at the ski-in-ski-out Vintage Room at St. Regis Deer Valley, the spot for ginger margaritas, sushi made from seafood flown in daily and the most hopping dance party in town. —Nina Kokotas Hahn

HOTEL DEL CORONADO

Coronado, California

A GRAND DAME'S SECOND ACT The story goes like this: In April 1920, Hotel del Coronado hosted a ball for 1,000 guests in honor of Edward, Prince of Wales' visit to San Diego. At the time, his future wife, Wallis Warfield Spencer Simpson, lived in Coronado, a chi-chi peninsula in San Diego Bay, then married to her first husband. Years later, in 1936, the newly crowned King Edward abdicated the throne to marry the American heiress—cementing the Del's place in a century of gilded transatlantic lore. Today, the hotel writes a new chapter. Fresh off a seven-year, $550 million reimagination, the resort maintains its Belle Époque grandeur following its first large-scale renovation since its 1888 opening. Unlike many hotel renovations—an infinity pool here, high-tech bidets there—the Del focused on painstaking restoration and preservation befitting its status as a National Historic Landmark. Most notable is the revitalization of the Victorian Neighborhood, including the landmark Victorian building, guestrooms, garden courtyard, and the legendary Crown Room. New additions feel thoughtfully integrated: Nobu Del Coronado and Serēa, a sea-to-table fine dining restaurant, bring contemporary energy without eclipsing the hotel's historic soul. The unveiling of the Shore House and Beach Village nabes—75 one- to three-bedroom flats and a gated cottage collection, respectively—add a residential dimension that further solidifies the Del's standing as a global resort icon. —Perri Ormont Blumberg

OKANA RESORT & INDOOR WATERPARK

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

BIG THRILLS, DEEPER MEANING In the Chickasaw language, the words for water ("oka") and friend ("inkana") merge to form Okana—a $400 million resort and waterpark from the Chickasaw Nation that's making waves, both literally and culturally, on the Oklahoma River. Opened in February 2025, the 404-room resort is a water wonderland: a 100,000-sq.-ft. indoor waterpark with 15 waterslides, a wave pool, and splash pads, plus a 4.5-acre outdoor lagoon—one of the largest in the country—where kids tackle a floating obstacle course while parents sip frozen piña coladas on a sandy beach beneath artificial palms. Between foam parties, sandcastle competitions, and an adults-only warming pool, Okana has fun for every age. An on-site entertainment center ups the ante with a neon mirror maze and two-story laser tag, while a baseball-themed restaurant pairs gourmet hot dogs with sports simulators. Family-friendly suites feature bunk beds and balconies, and a retro candy shop tops ice cream with white-fudge corn twists from Chickasaw-owned Bedré Fine Chocolate. In fact, much of the resort is outfitted by Indigenous makers. Cherokee brothers Bryan and Jake Waytula made the murals. Tribally-owned Mahota Textiles made the upholstered headboards. Together with the neighboring First Americans Museum—the largest single-building tribal cultural center in the U.S.—Okana is establishing Oklahoma City as a capital for Indigenous art, culture, and entertainment. —Matt Kirouac

North America
PLACES TO VISIT

NETFLIX HOUSE PHILADELPHIA

King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

BINGE-WATCHING BREAKS THE FOURTH WALL You're posing on a red-velvet *Bridgerton* throne. You're following Wednesday's severed sidekick Thing into a haunted carnival. You're digging into a Perfect Pickle Pie pizza. In November 2025, streaming platform Netflix opened its first permanent destination: Netflix House Philadelphia, an immersive two-story venue where familiar on-screen worlds spill out of the living room and into the wider world.

It's a new model for streamers, which have only dipped toes into the physical world. Marian Lee, Netflix's chief marketing officer, says the expansion into experiential entertainment gained momentum during the pandemic, after Netflix held its *Stranger Things* "Drive-Into" experience in 2020. "We didn't really anticipate [that] level of rabidness," she says. Since then, the company has rolled out hundreds of in-person experiences around the world, including *Bridgerton* balls and *KPop Demon Hunters* sing-alongs. "We decided this is worth doing on a more permanent basis," Lee says.

Not wanting to go full Disney World, Netflix opted for a more intimate and accessible—and Instagrammable—experience. Housed in a former Lord & Taylor department store at King of Prussia Mall, about 25 minutes outside Philadelphia, the more than 100,000-sq.-ft. space is free to explore. Visitors pass through a massive red envelope—a nod to the brand's early DVD-by-mail days—and are transported into a colorful atrium overflowing with

artwork and show props. From gilded *Love is Blind* goblets to menacing *Squid Game* guards, the space is engineered for photo ops.

Is it one big marketing campaign for the platform's shows? Yes. Does that make it any less fun for fans? No. Hour-long paid adventures bring together meticulous set design and interactive storytelling. In the *One Piece* experience, teams race through seven themed rooms, each with a puzzle to solve, in pursuit of the elusive Devil Fruit. Across the hall, Wednesday: Eve of the Outcasts drops fans into a delightfully eerie carnival at Nevermore Academy, complete with bewitched games, a murder mystery, and secret passages to explore.

"We think about it as fandom come to life," says Lee. "Everything we do is about putting the fan at the center, whether that's merchandise, something they'll wear, or a meet-and-greet."

Three VR gaming rooms, a mini golf course inspired by shows like *Is It Cake?* and *Bridgerton*, a 229-seat Tudum Theater for screenings and live events, and a stylish restaurant serving dishes and drinks inspired by Netflix productions, like the jumbo "Plot Twist" pretzel or WWE Smashedburger, make Netflix House a bonafide destination.

And Philadelphia was just the beginning. One month later, Netflix House Dallas opened in the Galleria Dallas mall, with the same free-to-enter, pay-as-you-go model. Each location has unique exhibits, and there, visitors can try a *Stranger Thing*s rescue mission, *Squid Game* challenges, and RePLAY, an interactive arcade. The next Netflix House—Las Vegas—will open in 2027, and Lee hopes the concept continues to expand from there. But the company has no plans to pursue the mega-park model. "I would love for this to be so successful that we're in every major city around the world," Lee says. "We want it to be a neighborhood hangout, a community place you can come back to again and again." —Kate Springer

North America

PLACES TO VISIT

HIGHWAY 1

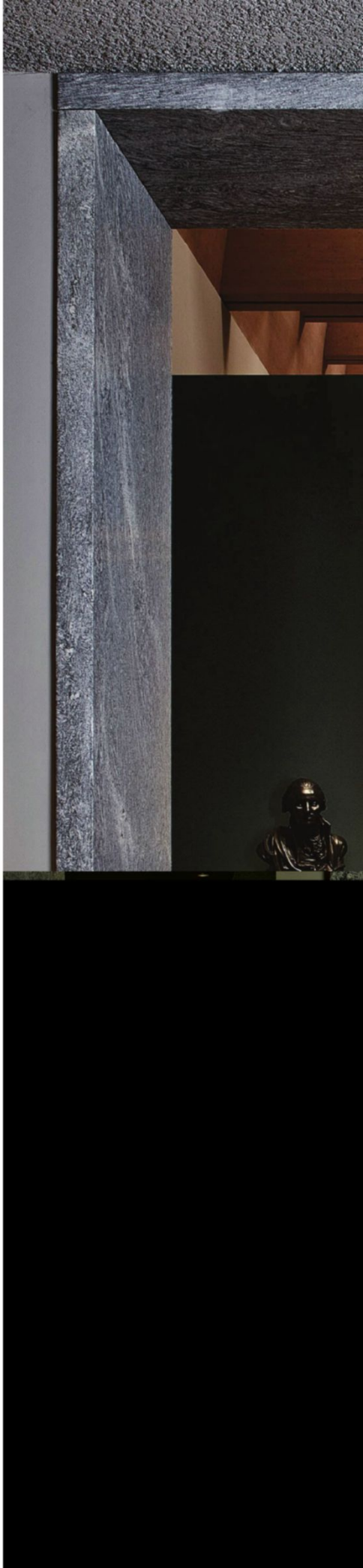
California

THE RETURN OF THE ULTIMATE WEST COAST ROAD TRIP California's epic coastal route, Highway 1—also known as the Pacific Coast Highway—reopened in its entirety on January 14, restoring one of the great American road trips. Stretching roughly 655 miles along the Pacific coastline from Dana Point in Orange County to Leggett in Mendocino County, the highway has been partially closed since January 2023, when multiple landslides and a road collapse shut down a 90-mile section. The disruptions affected one of Highway 1's most scenic legs—a narrow ribbon of road winding between the dramatic mountains of Big Sur and the planet's largest ocean. While the traffic-free pavement proved a boon for cyclists, the three-year shutdown forced drivers onto long inland detours and cost local businesses nearly $500 million in lost revenue. Following extensive stabilization work—including reinforced slopes and cable-net drapery designed to catch falling debris—Highway 1 once again links some of the state's most iconic landmarks, from Carmel-by-the-Sea to the opulent Hearst Castle. It also offers full access to Big Sur, celebrated for its remote wilderness, redwood forests, and legendary coastal views. —Laura Kiniry

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

New York City

A LONG-AWAITED CULTURAL LIVING ROOM Functioning as an inverted stoop, the tiered, 150-seat lobby of the new Studio Museum in Harlem welcomes neighbors and visitors alike off West 125th Street. The seven-story building is the institution's first purpose-built home since its founding—famously above a liquor store—in 1968. Designed by Adjaye Associates and Cooper Robertson, the museum reopened in November 2025 after seven years of construction. Led by former intern and longtime director Thelma Golden, it functions as both an archive and incubator for Black artists and Black culture. Viewers will find works by trailblazers such as sculptor Elizabeth Catlett and photographer Gordon Parks sharing real estate with former artists-in-residence turned household names like Kehinde Wiley, Mickalene Thomas, and Kerry James Marshall. At 82,000 square feet, the building, inspired by Harlem's churches, apartments, and street corners, nearly doubles the museum's gallery space. It also houses artist studios, a library, community meeting rooms, a gift shop stocked with monographs on Black artists, and a rooftop with a cultivated garden from Harlem-based Studio Zewde, planted with African Queen lilies and banana leaves.
—Ronda Racha Penrice



North America / PLACES TO VISIT

REEFLINE

Miami Beach, Florida

DIVE INTO THE ART SCENE Miami's art scene has gone BYOS (bring your own snorkel). Reefline is an underwater sculpture park, snorkel trail, and hybrid reef located just off Miami Beach. Conceived by biocultural placemaker Ximena Caminos, the project first gained backing from the Knight Arts Challenge before securing a $5 million, voter-approved Miami Beach bond in 2022. Nominated for Prince William's Earthshot Prize, Reefline brings together scientists, conservationists, architects, engineers, and artists to create a low-carbon installation that functions as a living coral reef, providing habitat for marine life. Architect Shohei Shigematsu of OMA masterplanned what will eventually become a seven-mile underwater corridor stretching north to Bal Harbour. The first artwork, *Concrete Coral*, by Argentine artist Leandro Erlich, was submerged 20 feet underwater last October. The installation takes the form of a subaquatic traffic jam: 22 full-scale cars embedded with Coral Lok technology to support the planting of some of the 2,200 corals being cultivated in Reefline's Coral Lab. Swimmers and free divers have already dubbed it a "mermaid playground." Future sections will feature works by Petroc Sesti, Carlos Betancourt and Alberto Latorre.
—Nora Walsh

North America
PLACES TO VISIT

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

Princeton, New Jersey

A CAMPUS ART POWERHOUSE

Princeton University punched well above its weight class with the October 2025 unveiling of its new art museum. At 146,000 square feet with 32 galleries, its footprint is roughly double the exhibition space of Paris' Picasso Museum. The project made headlines from the start: designs by Adjaye Associates show a striking mix of classical and contemporary spaces, with a Brutalist exterior and light-filled interiors finished in warm blue spruce. There's a surprisingly dense roster of bold-faced names—Rodin, Manet, Monet, Degas, Kandinsky—but careful attention has also been paid to North and Latin American artists through the 21st century, with six new commissions and acquisitions showcasing women and artists of color, including Syrian-born sculptor Diana Al-Hadid. To combat museum fatigue, curators play with juxtapositions: a Nick Cave *Soundsuit* next to an Edo-period samurai suit; Andy Warhol's *Blue Marilyn*, a 1962 screenprint of Marilyn Monroe as a sacred icon, facing a late-14th-century Florentine *Virgin and Child*. Anchoring it all is a colossal, 37-ft.-tall Cave mosaic at the entrance—a mixed-media "self-portrait" done as a wall relief—that ushers visitors into what's poised to become a landmark museum.

—Laura Dannen Redman

ART CITY

Tucumcari, New Mexico

ART AS CIVIC EXPERIMENT Just off century-old Route 66, in the nearly forgotten town of Tucumcari, a bold experiment is taking shape. Art City, a 40-acre open-air gallery and glampground, is the vision of conceptual artist Matty Mo, a.k.a. The Most Famous Artist. His mission is simple but ambitious: to show how art and culture can revive and transform declining communities. Here, 13 large-scale installations punctuate the high-desert landscape, from street artist fnnch's 20-ft.-wide crimson *Lips* to Griffin Loop's *Launch Intention*, a giant paper airplane tipped on its side—an invitation to lean into uncertainty. Day passes allow time to explore, but tent and RV sites, modern cabins, and shared amenities—like a sauna and communal kitchen—encourage overnight stays beneath wide-open skies. Mo recently acquired a 2,400-sq.-ft. warehouse, which he's turning into a creative incubator and retail space, and sees Art City as the first in a "global network of artist-led micro cities," a model he hopes other creators will adapt. "I'm open-sourcing my experience, ideas, and failures," he says, "so that others can learn from them." —Erin Gifford

North America / PLACES TO VISIT

INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY MUSEUM

Indianapolis, Indiana

A MOTORSPORT MECCA Following a 17-month renovation, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum reopened in April. Tucked inside the famed speedway, the museum added 40,000 sq. ft., transforming what was once a static collection into an immersive deep dive into American racing culture. Opened in 1956 with just 12 cars on display, today it safeguards more than 55,000 artifacts and 150 vehicles. New installations pull visitors into the spectacle: one immerses guests in an 80-ft. LED projection capturing the pageantry of the Indy 500; simulators let would-be drivers attempt four qualifying laps; and a pit stop station gamifies the split-second choreography behind a tire change. The Indianapolis 500 Winners Gallery traces more than a century of racing history. A new 72,000-sq.-ft. facility for restoration and events, slated for late 2026, promises to further cement the museum's role as a living archive of racing history. —Ashlea Halpern

North America
PLACES TO VISIT

SAVVIA

Mexico City, Mexico

RECLAIMING THE SHARED MEAL In a city increasingly shaped by Michelin ambitions and glossy openings, Savvia offers something quietly radical and distinctly Mexican: dining built around gathering. The house-turned-restaurant, which opened in October 2025 in Centro Histórico, centers on a sculptural red-marble communal table. Warm stone, dark wood, and candlelit brass details set the tone, while framed photographs and flickering candles evoke a lived-in home. The concept comes from three siblings—chef Kia Mosqueda and her brother Francisco and sister Jess—who draw on the flavors of their upbringing, with dishes inspired by their mother and grandmothers. The menu moves fluidly between ancestral and contemporary Mexican cooking, from octopus *pozole blanco* with charred salsa to *gorditas de nata* stuffed with meatballs and served with spiced cream. The result feels less like a restaurant and more like an invitation to the family table. —Michaela Trimble

North America / PLACES TO VISIT

COUNTERCULTURE MUSEUM

San Francisco, California

PEACE, LOVE, AND CONTEXT One of the first things visitors to the Counterculture Museum see is a four-minute video of the January 1967 Human Be-In. Playing on a mesmerizing loop, the footage captures some 50,000 young people gathered in Golden Gate Park to promote peace, music, and antiwar ideals. Move past the screen and the soundtrack of the '60s takes over, alongside an array of memorabilia, artifacts, and educational materials from this era—including detailed FBI fugitive posters of members of the far-left militant group Weather Underground. Special sections focus on women's rights, gay rights, and civil rights—causes that cofounder Estelle Cimino notes remain urgently relevant today. The museum also extends the story of the 1950s Beat Generation; Cimino and her husband, Jerry, cofounded San Francisco's Beat Museum in 2003. Fittingly, the exhibitions are housed at the corner of Haight and Ashbury, an epicenter of the 1960s counterculture revolution. Cimino hopes the space will inspire visitors to "rise up to create positive change" in their own lives. Opened in June 2025, the museum leaves room for levity, too, with exhibitions on people like Peggy Caserta, the creator of the bell-bottom jean. —Stacey Lastoe

North America
PLACES TO VISIT

THE FRICK COLLECTION

New York City

INSIDER ACCESS FOR ALL When the Frick Collection closed in 2021, New York didn't just lose access to one of the world's great museums—it lost entry into a rarefied private world. Housed in the former Beaux-Arts mansion of steel magnate Henry Clay Frick, the institution is renowned for its intimate presentation of European fine and decorative arts, spanning the Renaissance through the late 19th century, displayed not in white-box galleries but in richly appointed domestic rooms. After a $220 million restoration designed by Selldorf Architects, the Frick reopened in April 2025—right in time for its 90th anniversary—revealing its most consequential change yet: access to an entirely new floor. For the first time, visitors can ascend to the second-floor living quarters once occupied by Henry Clay, Adelaide Frick, and their daughter Helen Clay Frick where artworks have been returned to their original settings. Most notably, François Boucher's beloved eight-painting series *The Arts and Sciences* has been rehung in Adelaide's upstairs boudoir, where it once lived. The renovation also brings a new exhibition gallery, auditorium, education room, restaurant, coffee bar, restored 70th Street Garden, and improved ADA access. But the true achievement is subtler. By reopening its private rooms, the Frick restores the sensation that has always made it singular: the privilege of being invited inside. —Devorah Lev-Tov

MUSEO CASA KAHLO

Mexico City, Mexico

NEW INSIGHT INTO FRIDA The latest development in Mexico City's enduring love affair with Frida Kahlo began in September 2025 with the opening of Museo Casa Kahlo in leafy Coyoacán, just blocks from the celebrated Casa Azul. Housed in a building originally purchased by the artist's parents and later inhabited by Kahlo herself, the museum offers visitors a rich window into Kahlo family history. On display are intimate personal effects—embroidered blouses, combs, hand mirrors—alongside patriarch Guillermo Kahlo's extensive photography. The dining room features personal correspondence from Kahlo's travels, including homesick dispatches and wry quips about the lack of spice in American food. Artfully restored by Rockwell Group, which used old family photographs to guide the work, the home's basement holds Kahlo's original desk and a collection of objects that inspired her: intricate Asian dolls, preserved insects, and butterflies. "You can see Frida as a human being," says her grand-niece Mara Romeo, the home's last private owner. "This museum is the heart of the Kahlo family." —Theo Lee

North America
PLACES TO VISIT

NAAGAN

Owen Sound, Ontario

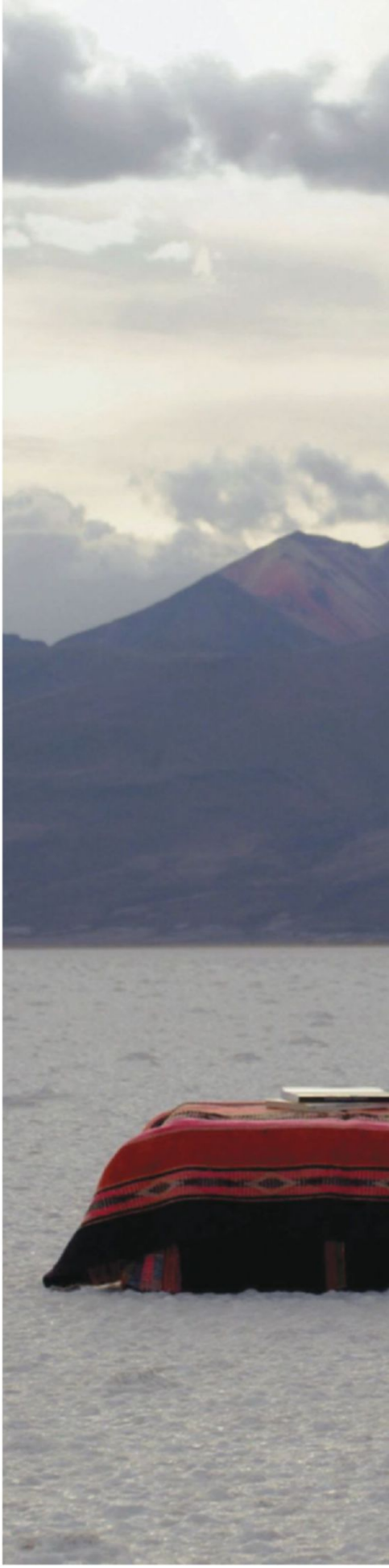
AN ASTOUNDING MEAL Fine dining exists to astonish, and Naagan, in tiny Owen Sound on Ontario's Georgian Bay, delivers a parade of dishes so transporting that many of the 17 diners served each night willingly make the four-hour round-trip drive from Toronto for its 12-course menu. Chef and owner Zach Keeshig, who is Ojibwa, frames the meal as a deeply personal expression of Indigenous cuisine, drawing on foraged, regionally native ingredients, and techniques honed in high-end kitchens. A mushroom-shaped tart made with birch bark fungus sits atop fallen birch branches amid a dry-ice fog that evokes mist in the woods. A partridge leg coated in puffed wild rice clutches a bouquet of wildflowers in its claw. Sweetgrass—a medicinal herb traditionally used in smudging ceremonies and prized for its vanilla-like aroma—appears in an ice cream served atop a box of beach rocks and finished with caramelized bee pollen. Each course arrives with context about the cultural role of game and plants, and the evening ends with a kitchen tour of the intimate, pine-edged space, where drying plants hang from the rafters. The experience is elevated, but Keeshig's goal is mainstream. "I think it's time for Indigenous food to have its moment," he says, "and be [part of the] conversation when people are thinking, 'Do I want French or Italian or Chinese tonight?'" —Elaine Glusac

North America / PLACES TO VISIT

UNIVERSAL EPIC UNIVERSE

Orlando, Florida

THE THEME PARK TO END ALL THEME PARKS It's fair to wonder whether the self-proclaimed Theme Park Capital of the World needed another marquee attraction—but doubts fade quickly at Universal Epic Universe, Universal Orlando Resort's fourth park and the first new theme park to open in Orlando in a quarter-century. Located less than five miles from Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure, and Volcano Bay, the 110-acre park lives up to the hype. Guests enter each of its five themed worlds through immersive portals. In Super Nintendo World, visitors pop through the green warp pipe into the Mushroom Kingdom, then choose their own adventure: Mine-Cart Madness rattles through Donkey Kong Country, while Mario Kart: Bowser's Challenge turns an augmented-reality race into a coin-collecting game. The showstopper sets belong to Wizarding World of Harry Potter–Ministry of Magic and its 1920s Parisian streetscapes, while the Harry Potter and the Battle at the Ministry ride keeps queuing guests entertained with talking portraits and animatronics. For extreme thrills, book it to Stardust Racers, a dual-launch coaster hitting speeds up to 62 m.p.h. Other worlds orbit a fantastical carousel in Celestial Park, including monster-heavy Dark Universe and the endearing How to Train Your Dragon—Isle of Berk. Three new Universal hotels also opened in 2025, the most luxurious of which is Universal Helios Grand Hotel, a Loews Hotel with a dedicated park entrance and early admission for guests. —Terry Ward



Central & South America / PLACES TO STAY

ESTANCIA MERCEDES

Puerto Natales, Chile

A TRANSFORMATIVE FAMILY STAY Across the Última Esperanza Sound from Puerto Natales, Chile, Estancia Mercedes offers travelers something elusive: the chance to really sink into the bones of a place. The fifth-generation cattle ranch, founded in 1916, launched a Rural Farm School in October 2025 that invites families—including children ages 8 and up—to take part in the work itself. Over four days, guests join horseback rides through thick forest, then out along mussel-strewn beaches. They learn natural horsemanship, fence construction and repair, firewood prep, sheep shearing, cattle herding, organic gardening and foraging, and how to cook the rib-sticking comfort fare that fuels life this far south. Activities are led by the family members themselves: Sebastián García Iglesias, a legendary gaucho once featured on the cover of *National Geographic*; his wife, skilled cook and host extraordinaire Grissel González Lasa; and their daughter, Naitiry García González, the estancia's youngest guide. With no internet in the rooms, memories are logged in journals and bonds form over long, shared meals, with guests and gauchos sitting shoulder to shoulder. It's immersive, a little muddy, and deeply human. —Ashlea Halpern

Central & South America
PLACES TO STAY

CASA GASTÓN

Jirira, Bolivia

ART AT THE EDGE OF UYUNI Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flat, lies 11,995 ft. above sea level in Bolivia and has long drawn travelers eager to experience its endless, otherworldly landscape. Most visit on day trips from Uyuni, 62 miles away. But staying at Casa Gastón—Bolivia's first luxury hotel and museum, opened in March—allows guests to experience the salar at a slower pace, from dawn to dusk. Set in the village of Jirira on the edge of the flat, beside fields of vividly colored Royal Quinoa, the property sits at the base of the Tunupa Volcano. It was designed by—and named for—the late contemporary Bolivian artist Gastón Ugalde, often called the Andean Warhol, and is built from local volcanic materials that anchor it to the landscape. Ugalde's legacy runs throughout the property, with his works on display and an artist-in-residency program guided by his mantra, "all is life, all is art." The program continues his commitment to creative exchange with local communities, using the site's remoteness as a catalyst rather than a constraint. Casa Gastón also doubles as a sanctuary for renewal. Guests can stargaze from private terraces while soaking in open-air lithium bathtubs, or unwind in saunas, steam rooms, and volcanic mineral treatments inspired by the terrain.
—Sorrel Moseley-Williams

Central & South America / PLACES TO STAY

NEKAJUI, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE

Peninsula Papagayo, Costa Rica

A QUIET JUNGLE COMMUNITY ENTERS ITS GOLDEN ERA The first new resort to debut on Costa Rica's Papagayo Peninsula in more than a decade, Nekajui, a Ritz-Carlton Reserve opened in February 2025 as the brand's first Reserve in Central or South America. Its name, derived from the Indigenous Chorotega word for "lush garden," feels apt. Lofted on a cliff, the hacienda-style entry is anchored by a statuesque ceiba tree, a hand-painted ox cart estimated to be more than 200 years old, and a jewel-like chapel whose mosaic—made with 650,000 hand-placed tiles—depicts capuchin monkeys. Accommodations are split between 107 guest rooms and suites, and three treetop tents with saltwater plunge pools. A sleek funicular shuttles guests down to a calm, crescent-shaped beach and buzzy beachside restaurant, but the gravitational center of the resort is the 27,000-sq.-ft. foot spa, home to one of the largest hydrotherapy pools in Central America. Chorotega-inspired rituals incorporate volcanic stone and juanalima, a local plant prized for its lemony, herbaceous scent. That reverence for nature carries beyond the grounds, with guided hikes through the nearby Palmares Reserve to spot howler monkeys, blue morpho butterflies, and even a colony of chittering bats. Adding to the peninsula's momentum, the newly opened Papagayo Park offers racquet sports, a pump track, wellness shala, and kid-friendly water park—underscoring just how much this once-sleepy enclave has grown. —Ashlea Halpern

Central & South America
PLACES TO STAY

PARED SUR CAMP

Puerto Guadal, Chile

A DEEPER CUT OF PATAGONIA For many travelers, Patagonia means Torres del Paine—its spectacular granite spires, world-class hiking, and, increasingly, crowded trails. Pared Sur Camp is the antidote. Launched in 2013 by veteran expedition leader Pablo Sepúlveda with just a handful of tents, the off-the-grid outpost, set on the edge of sapphire-blue General Carrera Lake, has steadily expanded into a versatile base that now houses 14 domes, four cabins, and a dormitory-style "refuge" that sleeps 40. Weeklong programs combine Class III white-water rafting on the Baker River, kayaking the lake's famed marble chapels, mountain biking stretches of the Carretera Austral, and trekking in Patagonia National Park. Lodging remains simple but thoughtful, with blessedly hot showers, wood-burning stoves, and wood-fired hot tubs. The food is excellent for such a lonesome outpost, with eggs plucked fresh from the henhouse, vegetables grown on-site, and wild morels foraged by the close-knit staff. Long, communal dinners fueled by Maqui beer culminate with an *asado* (Patagonia-style barbecue) on the final night—a whole lamb slow-roasting gaucho-style over an open fire, live guitar and accordion, conga lines, and red wine—that's raucous in the best way and a reminder that the most memorable journeys aren't just about distance, but the people you share them with. —Ashlea Halpern

TINAJANI

Southern Altiplano, Peru

A LUXURY CAMP IN THE REMOTE ALTIPLANO At more than 12,000 feet above sea level, deep in southern Peru's Altiplano, Tinajani sits inside a 371-acre private reserve carved into the red sandstone spires of the Cañón de Tinajani. Sculpted by wind and water over millennia, the canyon—nicknamed the Valley of the Giants—feels otherworldly, its towering formations rising from open plains scattered with traces of ancient seabeds, petroglyphs, and pre-Inca burial caves. The camp, which opened last June, includes a restored farmhouse that serves as a communal hub, alongside six tented suites outfitted with alpaca-wool textiles, wood-burning stoves, and outdoor soaking tubs overlooking the canyon. Guests explore the area by foot, bicycle, or car, eyes peeled for the rare Puya de Raimondi, which blooms just once every hundred years. They can also join guided walks led by local shamans and stargaze beneath some of the clearest skies in South America. —Sucheta Rawal

EPHEDRA RESTAURANT

San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

PRESERVING ATACAMA FOODS Sergio Armella studied law in Santiago de Chile but pivoted during the pandemic to chase a new dream: training under chef Rasmus Kofoed at Copenhagen's three-Michelin-star restaurant Geranium. He eventually made his way back to his native San Pedro de Atacama, an oasis in the world's driest non-polar desert, to focus on the foods he grew up with. The result is Ephedra, a fine-dining restaurant improbably set in the Indigenous Licán Antai *ayllu* of Poconche, five miles outside town. Opened with partner Carolina Colque, the restaurant has 12 tables arranged beneath the silhouette of the Licancabur Volcano. Diners choose from tasting menus featuring native ingredients foraged from the Atacama, including *pingo pingo*, whose reddish fruit—ephedra—gives the restaurant its name. "There are many elders who know about these plants," Armella says. "But if nobody documents that knowledge now, it could be lost forever." —Mark Johanson

Central & South America

PLACES TO VISIT

PERSO

Buenos Aires, Argentina

A TABLE ON HER TERMS During the pandemic, many chefs in Buenos Aires opened *puertas cerradas*—closed-door restaurants serving small groups in private settings. Constanza Cerezo Pawlak, known as Cons, was among them, until she was offered the executive chef position at a winery restaurant in Mendoza. In 2024, her work at Quimera Bistro earned a recommendation in the region's inaugural Michelin Guide, a distinction she retained in 2025—the year she also became a mother. "When Jaz was born, I realized work-life balance wasn't just about my career," Cerezo says. "It was about my daughter's childhood—building memories and sharing dinner." So she reopened her closed-door restaurant, this time with family at the center. Since late last year, Cerezo has been hosting four-course dinners twice a week for 12 to 18 guests at Perso, staged inside a private apartment in Palermo Hollywood. Expect dishes like Kung Pao peppers over fried *gnocco* and handmade cavatelli with herb beurre blanc. In kitchen slang, *perso* means the staff meal—and here, it's one that nourishes diners, a new mother, and the life she's building for her daughter.
—Karen Catchpole

EL CAMINO DE COSTA RICA

Costa Rica

A COAST-TO-COAST JUNGLE ADVENTURE Some people walk a camino for self-reflection; others for discovery. In Costa Rica, travelers come to get their feet wet on El Camino de Costa Rica, a newly certified 174-mile route linking the Caribbean and Pacific coasts. The trail crosses rushing rivers, cloud-covered mountains, and dense rainforest, unfolding in 16 stages that can be tackled all at once or in sections. The reward is access to a side of Costa Rica many visitors never see. Hikers travel to a rural hamlet where a family welcomes them into their home; through the Nairi-Awari Indigenous Reserve with a local Cabécar guide; and past working banana, pineapple, cacao, coffee, and sugarcane plantations. For the full end-to-end experience, specialist outfitters like Urritrek handle logistics, ferry luggage, introduce trekkers to local farmers, and point out the wildlife—iguanas, toucans, spider monkeys, hummingbirds—that accompanies nearly every step. —Laura Dannen Redman

Central & South America
PLACES TO VISIT

BACKYARD CAFÉ

Georgetown, Guyana

A RISING CAPITAL'S MOST COVETED TABLE The oil-rich South American nation of Guyana is the world's fastest-growing economy, and its capital Georgetown has transformed into a construction-filled boomtown. Business travelers have poured into the city, but where do they eat? At an unmarked restaurant located in the working-class West Ruimveldt neighborhood. The humble Backyard Café is a speakeasy-style spot tucked—true to its name—into the backyard of Chef Delven Adams' childhood home. Meals are reservation-only, and Adams asks diners for their protein preferences in advance. From there, he crafts seasonal, market-to-table menus that reflect Guyana's rich multi-ethnic heritage: Most Guyanese trace their roots to Africa or India, a legacy of British colonialism. Layer in the influence of Indigenous Amerindian communities, and you get dishes like pepperpot chicken jerked with *cassareep* (a cassava root extract), wiri-wiri peppers, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves—an improbable and heavenly combination that could only exist here. —Mark Johanson

Central & South America / PLACES TO VISIT

NARIZ DEL DIABLO

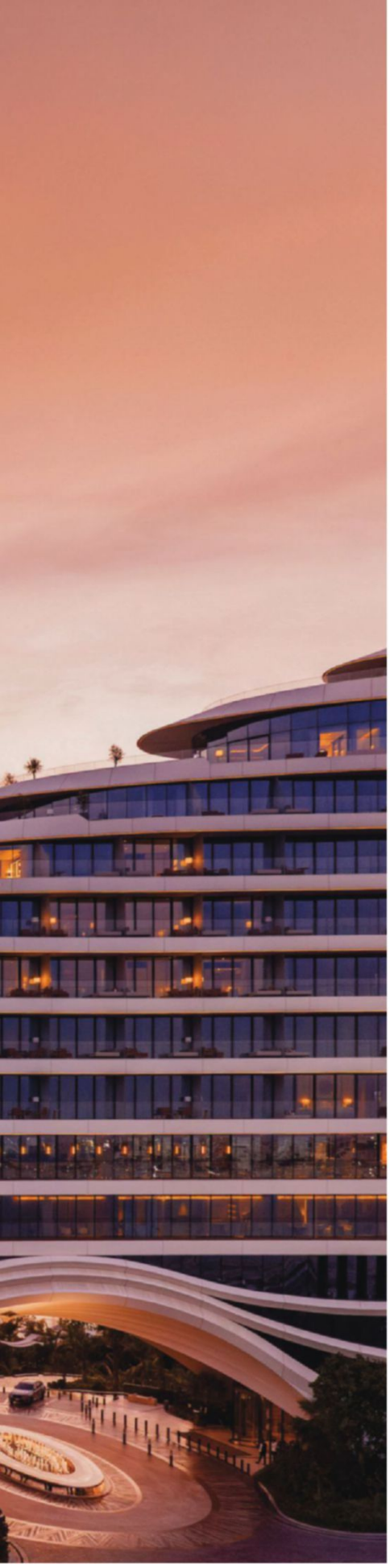
Andean Highlands, Ecuador

SWITCHBACKS IN THE SKY Passenger trains were once plentiful in Latin America. Many have shut down over time, but now, after five years of post-pandemic dormancy and a $685,000 restoration, the most dramatic rail line in Ecuador has returned to service. The Nariz del Diablo—Spanish for Devil's Nose—was built in the early 1900s to conquer a seemingly impassable rock formation in the Andes. Engineers solved the problem by cutting a series of tight switchbacks into the cliff faces, forcing trains to zigzag backward and forward as they climb or descend 1,677 ft. The result is a slow-motion ballet: At times the locomotive pulls the train; at others, it pushes from behind, while crew members jump out to manually switch tracks along stretches marked with signs warning *Cambio Pendiente* ("slope change"). Since last August, passengers have once again been welcomed aboard historic cars for the 15-mile, 2.5-hour round trip between Alausí to Sibambe, navigating the Devil's Nose twice. Beyond the adrenaline rush, the primarily touristic journey offers sweeping Andean views and a cultural welcome at Sibambe Station, where members of local communities share their traditional dance, handicrafts, and native food—turning a feat of engineering into a living heritage experience. —Karen Catchpole

JUMEIRAH MARSA AL ARAB

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

RESTRAINT OVER RAZZLE-DAZZLE The 1,004-room Ciel Dubai Marina may have claimed the title of the World's Tallest Hotel at 1,237 feet, but the city's most compelling hospitality to open in 2025 isn't defined by scale. It's Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab, a sinuous new seafront resort designed by Shaun Killa, the architect behind Dubai's Museum of the Future and the UFO-like silvery pods of Shebara resort in the Saudi Red Sea. Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab is the final piece in a maritime trio of luxury resorts that includes the sail-shaped Jumeirah Burj Al Arab—a landmark that put Dubai on the global luxury map in 1999—and the wave-like Jumeirah Beach Hotel. But there's more to Jumeirah Marsa Al Arab than its iconic architecture. It's set on the loveliest sweep of beach in the city. Its service is both warm and efficient, as welcoming to holidaymaking families as to solo staycationers. Its light-filled rooms all have outdoor space and its restaurants are exceptional, with hyper-seasonal Japanese ingredients on the menu at Umi Kei, and excellent Greek mezze with a side of Burj views at beachside Iliana. Above all, the resort captures Dubai's current zeitgeist, drawing a mix of Emiratis and well-heeled world travelers with its exciting energy, unmatched sense of style, and sprinkling of swagger. —Nicola Chilton



Middle East / PLACES TO STAY

BAB SAMHAN HOTEL

Diriyah, Saudi Arabia

NAJDI HERITAGE MEETS MODERN LUXURY While many of Saudi Arabia's splashy gigaprojects are radically futuristic, the newly built metropolis of Diriyah takes its lead from the Kingdom's 19th century capital, which was situated in the same spot. Amid the district's new developments, Bab Samhan, A Luxury Collection Hotel, the first of Diriyah's 37 planned resorts, quietly opened at the end of 2024. The aesthetics at this 134-room hotel channel the region's historic Najdi architecture, with mud-brick walls, tamarisk beams, canopied courtyards, geometrically patterned textiles, and triangle latticework woven into the façades. Restaurants Medheef and Jareed Samhan offer modern interpretations of classic Saudi fare, while celebrity chef Michael Mina presides over Taleed, blending Middle Eastern and Mediterranean flavors. Like all of Diriyah, Bab Samhan pays homage to the Kingdom's storied heritage—just minutes from the pulsing capital of Riyadh and its promise of the future. —Sarah Khan

Middle East / PLACES TO VISIT

SURF ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

PERFECT WAVES, NO OCEAN REQUIRED Surf pools are riding a wave of popularity. Recent openings include Europe's largest inland wave pool, Lost Shore Surf Resort in Edinburgh and Atlantic Surf Park in Virginia Beach, backed by Pharrell Williams, with more developments underway in New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, China, and Portugal.

But the new Surf Abu Dhabi in the UAE is the first to break through the pro surf world's skepticism about man-made waves. Surfing legend Kelly Slater spent a decade developing the wave technology, and partnered with local developer Modon Holding to open the facility, which pulls water from the sea, offering salty swells with a backdrop of the city's shimmering skyscrapers. It has already earned three Guinness World Records, including the world's longest artificial surfing wave and largest wave pool. Even more impressive: Surf Abu Dhabi will become the first artificial wave to join a surfing championship circuit in 2026, which includes legendary locations like Australia's Bells Beach and Hawaii's Banzai Pipeline. One of its waves, called Kelly's Wave, is now World Surf League-certified, featuring two distinct barrels and high-speed turn sections.

Ryan Watkins, Surf Abu Dhabi's general manager, says the facility's primary aim is simple: to produce the best waves, period. "There's no natural surf break in the world that runs perfection 365 days a year, but ours does," he says. "We run the wave

roughly every three minutes and 40 seconds—the interval that allows the basin to settle so each wave is perfect." That level of consistency and removal of uncertainties can be a major draw. It's also the ideal environment for beginners, with constant waves, no dangerous reefs or marine life to contend with, and no locals-only lineup.

There's a palpable sense of energy at Surf Abu Dhabi. Spectators can cheer tube rides and first-time stand-ups from the waterside restaurant Nalu, buy a day pass to the infinity pool and sunbeds, or spend the afternoon at Mediterranean beach club-style Ilios overlooking the surf break. Surf sessions start at AED 350 ($95 USD) for a beginner lesson, or up to AED 20,000 ($5,445 USD) to privatize the pool, yet demand remains strong. About 65% of clients are international, with regulars—dubbed "frequent fliers" by Watkins—returning multiple times a month, with some stopping over en route to Asian surf destinations and others flying in from across the Middle East.

And there's reason to believe the sport's embrace of artificial waves will only grow. As advances in wave tech and surfing's 2021 Olympic debut have fueled the global rise of surf pools, natural waves have become less predictable—a trend likely to continue, due to climate change. "Some studies suggest that waves will become more powerful in parts of the world and less powerful in others," says Dr. Chad Nelsen, CEO of the Surfrider Foundation. "To date, that has not dramatically impacted surf competitions, but climate change is also causing increased sea level rise and is impacting the health of ocean ecosystems, like coral reefs, and that will likely impact surf spots around the globe." In Abu Dhabi however, the surf will always be up. —Nicola Chilton

SIX FLAGS QIDDIYA CITY

Qiddiya City, Saudi Arabia

THE WORLD'S MOST EXTREME THEME PARK Six Flags Qiddiya City near Riyadh is the first Six Flags outside North America and the theme park company isn't messing around: Among its 28 rides are five world-record holders, including Sirocco Tower, the world's tallest drop tower at 475 ft., and Gyrospin, the tallest pendulum ride, delivering forces of up to five Gs. The headline attraction is Falcon's Flight, a 640-ft.-tall roller coaster stretching 2.6 miles—so big, in fact, it can be seen from space. Running parallel to Qiddiya's Speed Park Track, riders can "race" professional drivers, plunging 519 ft. and reaching speeds of up to 155 m.p.h. Afterward, guests can regroup at the firefly-lit Twilight Garden playground or the steampunk-inspired Steam Town before heading next door to the Aquarabia water park, home to—what else?—the world's tallest water slide. —Laura Dannen Redman

Middle East / PLACES TO VISIT

ZAYED NATIONAL MUSEUM

Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates

A COUNTRY DEFINES ITSELF Rising above the Saadiyat Cultural District, the Zayed National Museum announces itself with a roof crowned by feather-like steel forms inspired by a falcon in flight—an architectural flourish that also provides natural ventilation. It's a fitting image for an institution devoted to telling the story of a nation, the United Arab Emirates, too often dismissed as superficial by those unfamiliar with its depth. Beyond the museum's vast atrium, cocoon-like concrete galleries chart 300,000 years of human history. Exhibitions explore the UAE's founding, natural landscapes, and cultural traditions. Digital projections, interactive screens, and directional sound enhance the storytelling about objects ranging from the 8,000-year-old Abu Dhabi Pearl to a 3,800-year-old cuneiform tablet from Iraq, on loan from the British Museum and widely considered the world's oldest recorded customer complaint. (It protests a shipment of poor-quality copper and the equally dire customer service that accompanied it.) A steep path spirals up the exterior to a rooftop lookout beneath the falcon "wings," offering views over the gardens and the neighboring Abrahamic Family House, one of TIME's World's Greatest Places of 2024. It's an excellent addition to the UAE's growing cadre of cultural institutions, and one that will prove eye-opening to anyone curious about where this proudly advancing nation came from, and where it's going. —Nicola Chilton

Middle East / PLACES TO VISIT

LAWH WA QALAM: M.F. HUSAIN MUSEUM

Doha, Qatar

A FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND TRIBUTE M.F. Husain was one of India's most admired modern artists, often dubbed the nation's Picasso. Opened last November in Qatar Foundations' Education City, Lawh Wa Qalam is the world's first institution devoted entirely to his work. It holds more than 150 pieces, from paintings and sculptures to films, photography, and poetry, alongside personal effects such as his passport and artist's tools, tracing a life that carried him from South Asia to his final years in Doha. The experience extends well beyond static display. At its heart is *Seeroo fi al ardh*—"Travel through the Earth" in Arabic—a multimedia art installation exploring human innovation across time. Elsewhere, visitors encounter never-before-exhibited works from Arab civilization, including *The Battle of Badr*, where Husain merges Arabic calligraphy with his signature expressionist brushwork. "Husain's work connects the Arab world, South Asia, and the wider Global South," says Kholoud M. Al-Ali, executive director of community engagement and programming at Qatar Foundation. Even the building participates in that dialogue, its architecture drawing directly from a 2008 sketch by the artist. —Poonam Binayak

Antartica / PLACES TO STAY

AURORA EXPEDITIONS *DOUGLAS MAWSON*

The Southern Ocean

POLAR TRAVEL FOR SINGLES The cruise industry has long overlooked, and often penalized, solo travelers with hefty single supplements—the charge paid by those who board without a buddy. This is especially burdensome on polar expeditions that already carry eye-watering price tags. Certified B Corp Aurora Expeditions is addressing the issue: The company has eliminated single supplements across its fleet, and offers 10 single-occupancy staterooms per voyage on each of its three ships. The latest is the *Douglas Mawson*, which launched in December and includes dedicated solo cabins. Named for the man who led Australia's first major scientific expedition to Antarctica in 1911, the 154-passenger ship marks Aurora's return to East Antarctica for the first time in 15 years. Sustainability is built into the ship's design. Its wave-piercing Ulstein X-BOW hull reduces fuel consumption; GPS-powered virtual anchoring protects fragile seabeds; and industry-first microfiber filtration that captures what the company says is 99% of laundry microplastics. Aurora's Ocean Regeneration Program funds kelp planting and waste removal for every passenger too. —Jonny Bierman

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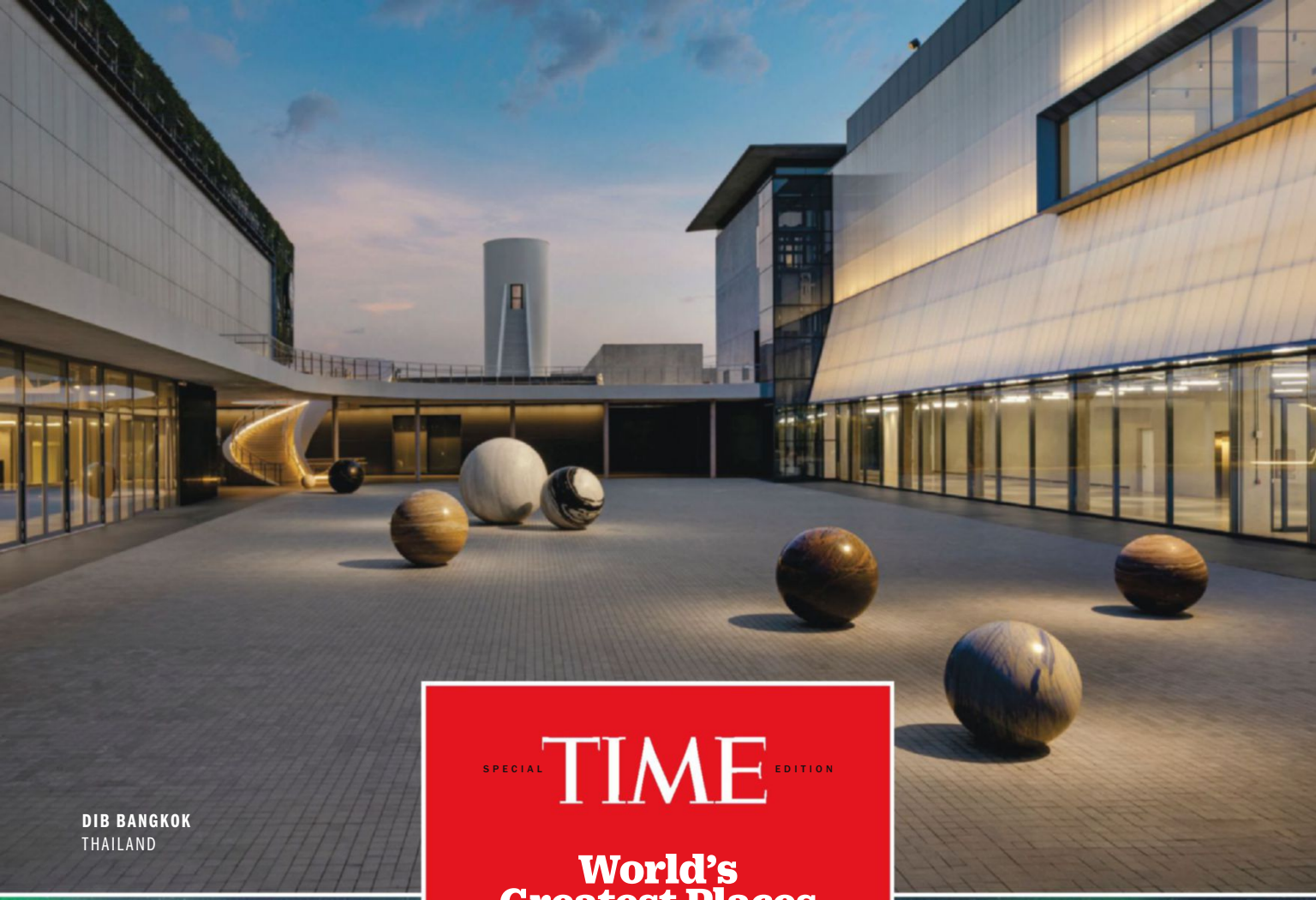

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